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PIONEER HUMANISTS

BY
JOHN M. ROBERTSON

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ERRATUM

P. 285, line 19, *for* Boehat, *read* Bochat

NOTE

OF the following essays, those on Machiavelli, Bacon, Hobbes, Spinoza, Gibbon, and Mary Wollstonecraft were contributed originally to *The Reformer*, and I have to thank Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner for permission to reprint them. That on Shaftesbury was first printed as an introduction to the edition of the *Characteristics* published in 1900 by Mr. Grant Richards. That on Mandeville appeared first in *Our Corner*, and later in a volume of *Essays towards a Critical Method*, published in 1889 and now out of print. All alike have been revised and expanded.

MACHIAVELLI

I.

SOME reputations are branded, for whole ages, by an ancestral pre-judgment, a traditionary malediction. As certain historic names stand signally for virtue or patriotism or human kindness, others carry a connotation of wickedness, which for the multitude is their net significance. Of such names Italy has perhaps more than her share. It is she who has given men their angel of humanity, Saint Francis; and to her belongs the counter figure, the outstanding human synonym for Mephistopheles. To that bad eminence Niccolò Machiavelli was raised by the men of other lands, not solely for his doctrine, of which they knew little when they maligned him, but largely because of his surroundings. He was, as it were, the pen or mouthpiece of the age of the Borgias, a name which carries still I know not what sinister aroma of crime and splendour, power and sin, dominating in the thought of many the whole multiform tradition of the Renaissance.

To those who strive towards a science of human nature it is known that such estimates are nearly always astray. On a close study, the saints are apt to dislimn. The moral halo proves to be nearly as much a donation of posterity as the pictorial; and the supernal figure of tradition is found to blend quite human virtues with very human shortcomings. So it is apt to be with the ideally bad of the

same order of traditional creation. They have their lights, as the others their shadows. And whether or not it be a work of doubtful profit to dislimn the saints; whether or not their virtues come the nearer to us when seen as simple qualities of faulty human beings, there is surely nothing but comfort for humanity in the dissolution of a paragon of evil into a simple sinner and sufferer of our own kind; above all when he can be shown to possess and communicate some positive light and virtue. Such is the case before us.

II.

In the history of political thought in the modern world, the first great name, or at least the first whose practical significance cannot be challenged, is Machiavelli's. With him begins the critical philosophy of politics, in terms of modern experience and modern conditions, for the world of politicians as distinct from that of scholars. Much keen political speculation doubtless went on in the schools, even in the Dark Ages. Arnold of Brescia, who fought politically against the Papacy in the twelfth century at Rome, and was burned for it, had probably given effect to some of the ideas of his master, Abailard; Dante, whose politics counted for so much in his philosophy of life, was not expounding novel ideas when he framed his scheme of government for Christendom; and the anti-papal *Defensor Pacis* of Marsiglio of Padua (otherwise Marsilius de Inghen) and John of Jandun, written in 1327, has been pronounced by a high authority "the greatest and most original political treatise of the Middle Ages"—and again "a book which announces a clear constitutional system such as in the present day either exists not at

all, or exists only in name in the greater part of Europe."[1] But Arnold left no writings; Dante's politics is an abstract ideal; and the *Defensor Pacis* is so little known that Hallam, in his *Introduction to the Literature of Europe,* does not even mention it.[2] In comparison with such a systematic treatise, to be sure, those of Machiavelli are merely essays and commentaries. But his work, in virtue of its actuality, passed into the general intellectual life of Europe, setting up a discussion which has lasted down to our own day. For generations, it is true, he was little read outside of Italy. There his posthumous success was speedy and great. When he died in 1527, after the sack of Rome, all Italy was in convulsion; and till 1530 Florence, putting in effect his military if not his political precepts, was making her last stand for freedom. But in 1531 Clement VII decreed the publication of his works, already well known in manuscript; two editions of *The Prince* appeared in 1532; and twenty-three editions of the works were issued in Italy in the next eighteen years. In the then state of political life in Europe, such a fame was bound to pass the Alps;[3] but it came about that it passed by way of scandal rather than of study. When France and England were ready for the literary assimilation of such a performance as Machiavelli's, the Catholic Reaction in Italy had so

[1] R. Lane Poole, *Illustrations of the History of Medieval Thought,* pp. 263, 265. Compare the eulogy of Villari: "It is almost incomprehensible how the book of a Churchman, and one completed so early as 1327, could contain ideas of so daring a nature as to be only understood and carried into effect many centuries later" (*Life and Times of Machiavelli,* Eng. trans., new ed. ii, 64). Neander, too, pronounces it an "epoch-making work."

[2] What seems to be the only copy in the British Museum was acquired in 1895.

[3] In 1550 appears the Geneva edition of the complete works.

blackened his name as to leave Luther's respectable in comparison ; and for Protestant and Catholic alike he was damned in advance as a reputed Atheist, though he had never controverted any Christian dogma. Of his real doctrine the North in the sixteenth century knew as little as it did of Mohammedanism. Not till 1576 appeared even the hostile *Discours* of Gentillet, known for long as the *Contre-Machiavel,* a malevolent compilation by a French Italophobe, in which the living argument of Machiavelli was reduced to a string of crooked aphorisms, framed to repel. By such a method, Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas could have been made to yield a code of unconscientiousness, and the Christian religion as a whole to supply a negation of all sane morality. No reader could gather from the *Contre-Machiavel* what manner of man Machiavelli was, or how he could have reached the views ascribed to him save by force of sheer passion for wickedness. Yet it was from Gentillet's work, translated in 1577 by Simon Patericke, an Englishman born and domiciled abroad, and presumably a Catholic, that the English generation of Shakespeare's day mostly derived its idea of Machiavelli and his work.

Herr Edward Meyer, who has made an admirably thorough research on the subject,[1] has counted in Elizabethan literature 395 references to Machiavelli, as against 500 to Aretino, his companion in reprobation. Of these the great mass proceed upon no further knowledge than was to be gathered from Patericke's version of Gentillet. The only current translations of Machiavelli's works were those of the

[1] *Machiavelli and the Elizabethan Drama,* Weimar, 1897.

Arte della Guerra, first published in 1560 and several times reprinted, and the *Istorie Fiorentine,* issued in 1595. The *Discorsi sopra Tito Livio* were first translated by Dacre in 1636, and the *Principe* by the same hand in 1640. Yet on the small basis of hearsay thus made possible before 1600 was raised a conception as vivid as it was false. "What the Elizabethans reverted to so often as the maxims of the Florentine statesman," says Herr Meyer, "were in four cases out of five not to be found in his writings at all, but were perverted from the same in a manner infinitely unjust." Had they known anything of the life and character of Petrarch, whom they commonly honoured as a prince of poets, they might have found in him qualities of treachery and even of savagery[1] which had no part in the personality of Machiavelli; but they proceeded on myth, not on history. The "Machiavel" of current allusion[2] was, in fact, a mere monster of evil in general, as Aretino was the incarnation of sensuality in particular. But the two ideals of evil fascinated the English imagination as no type of goodness seems to have been able to do; and, while Aretino was the exemplar of private vice, Machiavelli centred in himself every conception of public or political sin. That age is indeed much more obsessed by his supposed doctrine than by any of the Puritan ideals which gave to English history, in a later generation, a cast of fanaticism not savouring of his thought, though abundantly illustrative of his theories. Marlowe makes "Machiavel" prologuise to *The Jew of Malta,* presenting him as a

[1] *E.g.,* his faithlessness to his benefactors, the Colonna family, and his exhortation to Rienzi to destroy the Roman nobility without pity, even if he should have to pursue them to hell. Cp. Villari, i, 69-70.

[2] The name seems to have been often pronounced "Matchavel."

kind of patron saint of skilful villains, yet inserting the ambiguous line :—

> Admired I am of them that hate me most.

The dramatist seems to have borrowed the idea of the prologue from Gabriel Harvey's *Epigramma in effigiem Machiavelli* (1578), in which *Machiavellus ipse loquitur.* Though there is record of Harvey's borrowing Machiavelli's works from a friend, he seems, like most of his contemporaries, to have assimilated only the translation of Gentillet ; and inasmuch as Marlowe tacitly makes his devilish Barabas the representative of Machiavellianism, it is not to be supposed that he had any nearer knowledge.

It is true that Greene, who had lived in Italy, oftener names Machiavelli than do any of his co-rivals ;[1] and gives a lurid account of the Italian's teaching in his death-bed tract, *A Groatsworth of Wit,* in which he appeals to Marlowe to renounce the "diabolical Atheism" he had taken from that source. But as little as Greene learned his own vice and rascality from Machiavelli did Marlowe need Italian stimulus to make him frame the conception of his "Atheist Tamburlaine"; and when Greene in turn followed up that "high astounding" creation with his own Selimus, he was as far from reproducing Machiavelli's picture of the successful "Prince" as he was from portraying Machiavelli in the weakly villainous Ateukin who figures in *James IV.* An Italian, when all is said, might inquire whether it had needed Italian example to elicit such English types as Richard III, Henry VIII, and Thomas Cromwell; whether it was the writings of Aretino

[1] There are strong grounds for ascribing to Greene the allusion to "Machiavel" in *1 Henry VI,* V, iv, 74, and to him or to Marlowe that in *3 Henry VI,* III, ii, 193.

that debauched Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard; and whether Oliver Cromwell would not have seemed to Machiavelli a prince very much after his ideal. It was, in reality, the relevance of Machiavelli's writing to actual English experience that moved the more serious and studious Elizabethans to pass beyond the scarecrow of the stage to the real writer. Bacon exhibits the general interest. In the *Advancement of Learning* and the *Essays,* and again in the *De Augmentis Scientiarum,* he quotes him more than a dozen times, sometimes with a decorous repudiation of his ideas, but again and again with an undisguised sense of his sagacity. "We are much beholden," runs one passage, "to Machiavelli and others that write what men do and not what they ought to do."[1] Perhaps, indeed, the most Machiavellian sovereign in northern Europe in the sixteenth century was Queen Elizabeth, who had a court to match; and perhaps not the least truly Machiavellian of her councillors was the great author of the *Essays.*

III.

However that may be, it is round the name of Machiavelli that modern political science first begins to nucleate; and from him may be said to begin the line of the great modern writers on political theory—Bodin, Hobbes, Vico, Montesquieu—and even that of the political economists, whose science also may be said to have begun in Italy. Whatever, then, we may decide as to the substantive value of his contribution to political thought, Machiavelli must rank as a typical and epoch-marking political thinker.

The outline of his life, and his relation to the Italian

[1] *Advancement,* B. II (Routledge's ed. p. 140). Cp. the *De Augmentis,* B. VII, ch. iii. Ed. cited, p. 570.

politics of his day, are matters of common knowledge. His active career belongs to the closing part of the "free" period of Florentine history. For centuries the city had passed under the rule of faction after faction, who severally set up a long series of expedients to secure a balance of power among the "upper" classes and the so-called *popolo* or middle class. All expedients alike failed to avert a spell of military tyranny and an interlude of the dominion of the populace beneath the *popolo*. At length, after undergoing every political vicissitude possible to an unconquered State, the city had oscillated to a basis determined by the aristocracy of wealth, on which there had arisen and flourished for three generations the dominion of a family of capitalists, the "bosses" best adapted to the Florentine situation. The personal incapacity of young Piero de' Medici, faced by the crisis of the French invasion of 1494, had permitted a collapse in the system built up and sustained by his great-grandfather, his grandfather, and his father; and for eighteen years there endured a revival of the old oligarchic republicanism in its middle form, the last struggle of the ancient spirit before the Spanish restoration of the Medici, the prelude to the Spanish dominion. It is within that eighteen years of revived Florentine "freedom" that there emerge the two notable personalities of Machiavelli and Savonarola; and it was shortly after the Medicean restoration of 1512 that Machiavelli, living in forced retirement after his many years of service as secretary of "The Ten," wrote the work on which chiefly rests his fame. On the fall of the oligarchy, he had been imprisoned and tortured by the Mediceans; but *The Prince*, written in 1513, had been hesitatingly intended for presentation to the young Giuliano de' Medici, who

died in 1516; and it was actually inscribed to the young Lorenzo, his nephew, who succeeded him, living till 1519. The *Discourses on Livy* were begun in the same year, and really constitute a companion treatise, embodying as they do many of the same doctrines, though directed chiefly to a study of the conditions of success for States, in terms of Roman experience; whereas *The Prince* is a study of the way of success for one-man rule. Thus, though Machiavelli's personal political experience had been gained during the fourteen or fifteen years of his employment as Secretary and Ambassador by the middle-class oligarchy, he gave his political philosophy its historic shape at a time when the oligarchy had finally proved unable to uphold itself against the dynastic forces around. In the *Discourses* he had considered how republics might maintain themselves, always, indeed, laying stress on the supreme importance of the legislator as determining their course, but never disguising his love of the republican life.[1] "It is not private but public good," he declares, "that makes a State great; and without doubt the public good is considered only in a republic."[2] In *The Prince,* however, he has either practically or by way of theoretic assumption submitted to fate, chosen his side, and schemed for his country by way of a new monarchy. Henceforth Florence, the greatest of the Italian communities, must perforce submit to some form of monarchic government, as every other Italian city had done save Venice. To escape the alien rule of France or Spain, all Italy must have a

[1] "He always preserved his republican sentiments.....His first and supreme ideal was republican Rome, than which his imagination could conceive nothing grander nor more glorious" (Villari, ii, 93).

[2] *Discorsi,* ii, 2.

native prince of some kind; and, as there was no getting rid of the forever disturbing presence of the Papacy, it was just as well to attempt a combination in which a Medicean Prince might have a Medicean Pope (Leo X) to back him. Such, broadly speaking, were the circumstances under which Machiavelli drew up the great little book which above all his writings characterises him for posterity.

On the face of the case, it is plain that a book so produced cannot be a permanent foundation for political thought. It is a prescription for an Italian community at a particular period; and it does not even attempt to show that the cycle of Italian politics is the necessary cycle for all civilisations. Above all, it does not attempt, beyond the scope of a few broad assumptions, to set forth how politics *ought* to go in terms of any theory of progressive perfection; and some such undertaking practically forces itself on the political thought of our own day. What he sought was to understand political history as a causal sequence, to find what methods had answered, to explain to Italians why things had gone with them as they did. Yet there is so much that has perpetual significance in the evolution of the Italian republics; there is such a visible possibility that later politics may exhibit the same laws; and there is such a rare objectivity in Machiavelli's handling of the forces of political human nature, that the interest of his teaching is perhaps more general and more serious now than ever. As a matter of fact, the last generation of the last century has given a larger measure of close study to his work and his problem than had ever before been given in the same space of time.

That the progression from malediction to reflection as regards Machiavelli's work is wholly in the way of

reason can be best seen, perhaps, by a glance at the estimate passed upon it by Spinoza in his last writing. While the name of the author of *The Prince* was still a by-word for calculating villainy, so used by most men without the slightest first-hand knowledge of his teaching, yet also by most men who had read his books, the great Jew delivers judgment with all the penetrating wisdom which marks his handling of deeper problems :—

> What methods a prince who is moved solely by the lust of dominion should use to establish and preserve his rule, the most acute Machiavelli has fully set forth ; to what end, indeed, is not very clear. If, however, he had a good aim, as is to be believed of a sagacious man, it would seem to have been that he might show how thoughtlessly [*imprudenter*] many strive to get rid of a tyrant, when thereby the causes why the prince is a tyrant cannot be stopped, but are on the contrary strengthened, in that the prince is given more cause to fear ; which happens when the multitude makes an example of its prince, and vaunts the parricide as a thing well done. Further, he perhaps wished to show how much a free multitude should beware of trusting its welfare absolutely to one man, who, unless he is vain enough to think he can please everybody, must be in daily fear of plots, and is thus forced rather to care for himself, and to plot against the multitude, than to seek its good. And I am the more led to thinking thus of that most astute [*prudentissimo*] man, because he is known to have been on the side of liberty, for the safeguarding of which he has also given the most salutary counsels.[1]

Deep answereth unto deep. And Spinoza, in his *Tractatus Politicus,* lays down for himself at the outset precisely the method of Machiavelli—"not to deride or deplore, neither to detest, but to understand human actions," and to study "human passions, such as love, hate, wrath, envy, arrogance, compassion, and

[1] *Tractatus Politicus,* v, § 7.

the other commotions of the mind, not as vices, but as properties of human nature, which belong to it as do heat, cold, storm, thunder, and the rest, to the nature of the atmosphere." Thus spoke the best man who had written of politics down to his time.

IV.

To-day, happily, we need not occupy ourselves much with the old conception according to which Machiavelli was a kind of incarnation of evil—the "Old Nick" of political life, inciting princes and men to treasons, stratagems, and spoils. That illusion disappears for all considerate readers as soon as they have studied the problem for themselves. With a very few exceptions, all the instructed men who have sat in judgment on Machiavelli during the past hundred years have brushed the chimæra aside. Macaulay and Hallam among ourselves did it in the first quarter of the century; Mr. Morley has done as much in the last; and in Lord Acton's all-learned preface to Mr. Burd's Clarendon Press edition of the *Principe* anyone may read a score of Continental verdicts to similar effect. There is even a tendency, as in Lord Acton's own case, to pitch the note of the vindication a trifle too high. But as the proper form of the vindication is the question before us, our pronouncement had better come after and not before a survey of the main issues.

Machiavelli, all students will now agree, was no wilful worsener of political life. He loved neither treachery nor tyranny; he is himself so preternaturally candid that, though we may be at times dazzled by his inhuman lucidity, and though he sometimes vacillates, we can never accuse him of sophistry, or even of gratuitous cynicism. "Never,"

his chief biographer makes bold to say, "never was there a less Machiavellian man than Machiavelli"; and the paradox will stand, at least in the sense of the further contention that "we might, with greater justice, accuse him of cynicism than of filling his writings with premeditated reticences or hidden intentions."[1] But we may go farther. As the same student has put it, there was "Machiavellianism before Machiavelli"; and the written theory is something higher than the usage out of which it grew. In the words of Macaulay, the fault of the author of *The Prince* was "that, having adopted some of the maxims generally received, he arranged them more luminously, and expressed them more forcibly, than any other writer." We might add that the maxims in question were relatively among the decencies of contemporary statesmanship. There is no need to go to Cesare Borgia for a model of unscrupulousness in that day: the difficulty is to find a notable ruler who could not equally sit for the portrait. Caterina Sforza holds her own with the men, alike in capacity and in criminality. The maxims of statecraft with which Machiavelli has been most reproached are almost respectable beside the normal practice of his world, nay, beside the frequent practice of statecraft in our own day; and the leading types of hostility to his memory are the very types of the immorality which he dispassionately accepted as a political force —the masterful Teutonic hypocrite, represented by Frederick the Great; and the official or ecclesiastical Latin hypocrite, represented by the Papacy.

A writer who saw and showed with such deadly precision the fatal function of the Papal power in

[1] Villari, *Life and Times of Machiavelli*, Eng. trans., new ed. ii, 139.

Italy was bound, when the Reformation in the North had evoked the counter Reformation in the South, to become *anathema* at Rome; and so it came about, as Lord Acton notes, that "when the Index was instituted in 1557, Machiavelli was one of the first writers condemned, and he was more rigorously and implacably condemned than anybody else.....The exclusion of Machiavelli was permanent."[1] He was, of course, clerically accused of defying all the laws of God and man, of prescribing crime, and of abolishing virtue; when as a matter of fact the Papacy had repeatedly given concrete sanction to political crimes of which he never dreamt, and its daily diplomacy was a school in which, as Mandeville later put it, men "deceived one another by counterfeiting hypocrisy";[2] the supreme stroke of deception being to speak the truth, in the knowledge that it would not be believed. On the points of political doctrine, again, on which Machiavelli is rightly to be pronounced at once short-sighted and iniquitous, he was at one with his age, even as it was represented by men who pass for scrupulous types. To understand him we must treat him with perfect equanimity, as a master-spirit counselling an age far gone in political experience, and well qualified to confute any who should have gone about to browbeat or sermonise him.

The moment Machiavelli's immediate problem is realised, then, he is seen to be first and foremost a practical politician, who, however, brought to his practice at once the spirit of science and a patriotic ideal. We shall misconceive him if we do not keep in view the latter inspiration, which always primes Machiavelli's reasoning, and, indeed, tends to deflect

[1] Preface to Burd's edition of *Il Principe*, 1891, p. 22.
[2] Dialogue I, in vol. ii of *The Fable of the Bees* (ed. 1772, p. 44).

it, making him see all history from the point of view of the Italian yearning for a united Italy. His thought is thus the more readily intelligible to-day because it is guided by just such conceptions as rule modern international politics; since he was one of the first writers to bring into Italian life the ideal of nationality, which the pseudo-cosmopolitan character of the Papacy had thus far shut out, despite the enthusiasm for it professed by such a Pope as Julius II. Like nearly all Italians of the time, he desired the supremacy or paramountcy of his own State; but he is so far national that he desires it above all as against the domineering foreigner, and would welcome any Italian prince who could avail to drive that foreigner out. What prevented a general gravitation to that attitude was just the intense and prolonged evolution of intestine strife in Italy down till his day. Nine Italians out of ten had been so embroiled in mutual hates, had accumulated such rancours against fellow-citizens or neighbouring communities, that the foreigner was for them an almost impersonal exterior force, to be used by each if possible against the others. Hence the welcome given to the French invaders in 1494, a welcome astonishing to themselves. They could not at first realise that Italy was as it were a separate Europe of warring powers, rather than one country peopled by one race. And hence, in turn, their own swift failure. Themselves children of passion, they almost at once roused Italy against them by proving to be a worse evil than the native foe. When, in 1499, they defeated "the Moor" and took Milan, to the joy of the people, they so ruled that in six months' time the Milanese eagerly welcomed back the expelled duke.

Machiavelli in his own case perhaps anticipated the

natural reaction against the foreigner, inasmuch as he was earlier in a position to think of him critically, and to relate to him with a "consciousness of kind." Making one diplomatic journey after another, and carrying with him from his birth a clear head, incapable of harbouring any blinding hatred of any faction or Italian State, he early fell back on the primary instinct of race, which in his case had been grafted with a keen intellectual interest in the power and polity of ancient Rome. Such a development will surprise only those who, themselves ruled by the instinct of race, can see only its inapplicability in the case of other people. In Machiavelli, with all his science, the instinct was permanent; so little does all his ratiocination deflect him from the high road of political life. The revived spirit of nationality survived in his case his personal torture at the hands of the Mediceans; and after scheming in the *Discourses* for a growth of Florentine power as against other Italian States, he sketches in *The Prince* the methods by which an astute Medicean ruler may build up an Italian power that shall expel the alien. Formerly, he had hated the Papacy as much as he could hate anything, since it was for him the prime cause of Italian strife and alien invasion, and even the great corrupter of Italian morals. But now he will co-operate with the Papacy against the "barbarian dominion" which, he declares, all men hate.

It would seem, then, that the fair course towards Machiavelli is to judge him in terms of his political ideal and his relation to political evolution in general, rather than to discuss the fitness or decency of certain items of his advice to princes. We may indeed debate whether the advice he gives was such as could really have conducted a prince of

his day to wide dominion; but we should soon be forced, I think, to agree in an affirmative. No belief in the normal expediency of generous courses and scrupulous delicacy can obscure for a student the fact that the successful princes of that age succeeded largely in virtue of such methods as Machiavelli recommends. His treatise is, in fact, a digest of their more politic practice, eliminating their senseless cruelties, their personal follies, and their supererogatory frauds. When one contemplates the downfall of such a rarely capable prince as Cesare Borgia on the apparent verge of a universal triumph, one cannot but ask whether a policy of co-operation and concession might not have succeeded better than one of utter egoism. The answer, however, must be that a scrupulous and generous man could never have made the first steps in Cesare's elevation; and, had he been born to the princely status, could hardly have maintained it against the types around him. Cesare, in Machiavelli's opinion, simply made one fatal oversight, which ruined all: the lesson is, avoid such an oversight. And in so far as Cesare's private egoism and useless savageries had raised up obstacles to his political ambition, Machiavelli's counsels always imply that such stress of egoism is impolitic and thriftless.

V.

Of deeper and wider if of less stimulating interest is the less famous work in which Machiavelli sets forth his reflections on Roman history. This is essentially the more scientific book of the two. Both, indeed, are inductive, but this is inductive on a wider field, and yields a greater range of observation and inference; thus serving Montesquieu as a basis for

the lesser in size but the stronger in substance of his two leading treatises. Treating Machiavelli on general principles, one is apt to overlook the incomparable sagacity of many of his detached comments on Roman affairs. No book produced in the Christian era up to his time had contained so much rational and acute reflection on questions of public action; and, though it has never been so much debated or so notorious as *The Prince,* it must always have served to give bottom and weight to his reputation among thinking men. To meet with such clarity and sanity of judgment on the process of human affairs in such a world as that of the end of the Italian Renaissance, must have been something like what it would be now to meet with sound political philosophy in the leading columns of the *Times.* When he notes the value in ancient Rome of free public accusation and of open and strenuous debate between the populace and the senate; when he dwells on the ill results for the people of their creation of decemvirs, on the effects of free institutions on population, on the reasons why republics are hard masters, on the causes of Roman growth; he is bringing to bear on practical politics a light which before his time did not exist, unless under a bushel.

To the general problem, however, we must return. Machiavelli's two chief treatises being respectively counsels to an ambitious republic and to an ambitious prince, they remain rather handbooks for competing individualisms than gifts to mankind; and they gratify rather the instincts of emulation and self-assertion than those of philanthropy. To say this is to acknowledge a serious limitation. In a sense Machiavelli has set himself a smaller problem and a narrower ideal, however much more profoundly he

might handle them, than those represented by Augustine and Dante, to say nothing of later thinkers. And while it is to be said of the earlier idealists that they had no practical gift whatever, and that their prescriptions for contemporary mankind were valueless, it must at least be said against Machiavelli that he failed to press the best prescription for the Italy of his day—the prescription of federal union for the States who so constantly weakened each other by their jealous enmities. He was far too observant not to have considered it: in the fourth chapter of the second book of the *Discourses* he compares the three methods of republican expansion or growth—that by confederations, that by paramountcy among self-governing allies, and that by subjection of conquered peoples. Of these he notes, curtly and emphatically, that the last is perfectly futile and cannot endure; and he admits the advantages of the federal system—in particular, freedom from war, check to aggression, and the easy conservation of what has been acquired. It was indeed impossible that these advantages should not have been perceived in the Renaissance; and we know that in the year 1447, on the fall of the Visconti at Milan, there was afoot a scheme for a confederation of Italian cities, which was frustrated partly by the resistance of the Milanese, partly by the combination of Cosmo de' Medici and Venice to prevent the restoration of Milanese independence. But Machiavelli in effect puts the idea of federation aside, giving the palm without qualification to the methods which aggrandised ancient Rome.

Here, it would seem, he let his verdict be determined by the circumstance that federation had apparently no chance, though in point of fact he does not give that as his reason. What he does argue is

that federal States tend to take the pay and fight the battles of other States, as did the Swiss in his own day; or else to aim at getting tribute from smaller States; or in general to be avaricious and perfidious, like the ancient Ætolians—a most perfunctory and inconclusive argument, very unlike his usual strong simplicity. Had he been bent on advocating federation, he would have shown, as he did in regard to the drawbacks of the Roman system, that it involved certain risks, and that these risks must be guarded against. The drawbacks he mentions are clearly not inseparable from federalism. Whether or not, then, his bent had been fixed by the proved unpreparedness of the Italians for federation, and by the special difficulty of it in their circumstances, we must say that he does show a bias, and that it is in terms of an instinctive or acquired preference for the ideal of dominion. To the ideal of ancient Rome he always turns with alacrity; his dream is a rebuilding of Italian greatness by the ancient methods; he would tread again the paths the Romans trod, imitating as far as might be every institution which appeared to have nourished their power. As Macaulay has remarked, some such dream of restoration at that time "fascinated all the master-spirits of Italy," and some that were not master-spirits—men such as Julius and Leo and Clement VII, Morone, Pescara, and the last Sforza. And in a ringing period Macaulay tells how the ancient ideal wrought on Machiavelli: "He speaks like one sick of the calamitous times and abject people among whom his lot is cast. He pines for the strength and glory of ancient Rome, for the fasces of Brutus and the sword of Scipio, the gravity of the curule chair and the bloody pomp of the triumphal sacrifice."

This again is a judgment. To plan for Italy by the light of such an ideal was not to profit by the full measure of historical experience; it was only to set one vicious ideal against another, to crave an old experience instead of that of the hour. Like every other writer of the Italian Renaissance, Machiavelli evades the final lesson of Roman history; he will not confess, he will not see, that all that march of pride and power was a progress to perdition; that the greatness of Rome meant the gradual belittling of the Romans; that even the astute methods which he applauded led unalterably to the autocracy, to the debasement of the individual, to social disease, to intellectual paralysis, to subjection, ruin, and the downfall of civilisation itself. Had his ideal for Italy been realised by Florence as a community, it could have led only to ruin and degradation with a difference. From the point of view of humanity at large, what did actually happen was no worse. An Italy ruled by one prince might have been a substantial success; but only if it subordinated the Church—an inexpressibly difficult thing to do. Better even the rule of the alien, leaving the possibility of a Bruno and a Galileo and a Vico and a Beccaria, than a Borgian empire which, being entwined with the Papacy, might have prevented the rise of such minds as these, and left Italy in the seventeenth century as mindless as the Rome of the seventh.

There is a notable passage in Guicciardini's *Considerations* on Machiavelli's *Discourses* in which that astute politician, who is usually content to cavil over details and to rebut the exaggerations of his great contemporary, is moved to a novel reach of speculation. "Of the court of Rome," he writes, here agreeing with Machiavelli,

> it is impossible to speak with sufficient severity, for it is a standing infamy, an example of all that is most vile and shameful in the world. And it is also true that the Church has prevented the union of Italy in a single State; but I do not know whether this be a good or an evil. A single republic might certainly have made the name of Italy glorious, and been of the utmost profit to the capital city; but it would have proved the ruin of every other city. It is true that our division has brought many calamities upon us, although it should be remembered that the invasions of the barbarians began in the time of the Romans exactly when Italy was united. And divided Italy has succeeded in having so many free cities that I believe that a single republic would have caused her more misery than happiness. It is true that this might not have been the case under a monarchy, which is more impartial in the treatment of its subjects; and thus we behold France and other countries living happily under a king. Yet, whether by fate or by the nature of men, this land has always desired liberty, and therefore has never been able to unite under one rule. The Romans succeeded in it only by their great valour and strength; but no sooner was the Republic extinguished, no sooner did the emperors' valour fail, than they easily lost their dominion. Hence I believe that, if the Church has prevented the union of Italy, it has not been for her unhappiness, inasmuch as she has thus been able to live according to her own nature.[1]

The reasoning has the uncertainty of the man wont to argue merely from his single experience; but he has laid his finger on a central truth. If only the "nature" of the men of that age could have been purged of the lust of dominion, there had been a new departure in civilisation. But in the blind determination of the Florentines to dominate Pisa there was involved the whole fatality of Italian history, and of their own downfall. Machiavelli could see the danger to all Italian liberty from the sleepless

[1] *Considerazioni sui Discorsi del Machiavelli*, on ch. xii of bk. i. *Op. Ined. di Guicciardini*, 1857-66, i. (Cited by Villari, ii, 151.) Cp. the same work, i, 28.

ambition of Venice; and he probably agreed with Guicciardini that when Cosmo de' Medici aided Sforza to make himself master of Milan he saved all Italy from Venetian rule.[1] But only the failure of Florence could open his eyes to the evil involved in the ambition of his own city, which was but a variant of the egoisms of each one of its classes and factions.

Macaulay has hastily summed up that "Machiavelli deeply regretted the misfortunes of his country, and clearly discerned the cause and the remedy. It was the military system of the Italian people which had extinguished their valour and discipline.....The Secretary projected a scheme, alike honourable to his heart and to his intellect, for abolishing the use of mercenary troops and for organising a national militia." To put these matters as "cause" and "remedy" is to miss the real causation, which, to modern eyes looking back, should be obvious, though Machiavelli did not reach it. We want to know *why* the Italians had gravitated to their system of mercenaries. As Macaulay noted, the phenomenon was not new. "Within eighty years after the battle of Platæa, mercenary troops were everywhere plying for battles and sieges. In the time of Demosthenes it was scarcely possible to persuade or compel the Athenians to enlist for foreign service." Again, why? Because men had outgrown the psychic stage at which they annually sallied forth to fight with a neighbour city, and after a brush returned to their avocations—had outgrown, that is, the primary and not ungenerous inclination to combat, while inordinately developing the malicious appetite for plunder and dominion and for other men's overthrow. While peoples are ready

[1] Guicciardini, *Opere Inedite,* iii, *Storia di Firenze,* pp. 8, 9 (cited by Villari, i, 5).

to fight in their own quarrel, the "military virtues," such as they are, will subsist. When men still lust for conquest, without caring to fight, the military and the civic virtues are gone alike. Nothing could restore either form of virtue to the Florentines save a new ethic or an honest war of self-defence; and Machiavelli's prescription, though they finally took it, came too late. They had wasted their strength and unhinged their polity in wars of oppression.

Looking back, we can see how, just as conquest was the deadliest solvent of civic unity in ancient Rome, the disintegration of Florence at the beginning of the sixteenth century arose directly out of the insensate pursuit of the conquest of Pisa. It was that policy which loaded the city with debt till, every form of constitution failing to secure the military end, "at last necessary grants of money ceased to be voted, the soldiery received no pay, and influential citizens refused to accept embassies or other high offices, which were consequently bestowed on obscure and insignificant men, who, as Guicciardini phrased it, 'had more tongue than presence,' and were merely chosen because they pushed themselves forward."[1] Even the aggressive play of patriotism broke down, because animosity to Pisa had become the sole ground of action. Men who were united only to oppress others could no longer cohere when their efforts at oppression failed.

Had Machiavelli realised this, perhaps he would not have written at all, inasmuch as the discovery would have meant a cessation of belief in any solution then possible. As it was, though he did turn away from the solution for which it had been his business

[1] Villari, i, 278, citing Guicciardini, *Storia Fiorentina*, ch. xxiv, pp. 257–8, and ch. xxv, p. 274. Cp. Villari, pp. 233–4, 270.

to strive while he served the Florentine Government, he continued to account for the lack of sound political material on any ground rather than the lack of the spirit of reciprocity in his contemporaries. Missing as he does here the fundamental moral fact, his reasoning becomes arbitrary and incoherent. Had he known the history of Greece as he knew the history of Rome, he could hardly have missed the lesson that city States which will not respect the rights of others end by losing their own. Instead of a sound induction from relevant experience, he frames a false one from a disparate case. In two curious chapters he elaborates the two theses that on the one hand it is a calamity to a State to lack that sense of religion and fear of deity which, as he holds, visibly strengthened ancient Rome ; and, on the other hand, that Christianity has made men effeminate and other-worldly. Both theses were by way of explaining the evil plight of Italy ; and both are plainly beside the case, being indeed mutually annihilative. France and Spain had the same religion as the Italians ; and their success as against Italy was the very trouble in hand. Effeminacy, again, had been as common a phenomenon under Paganism as under Christianity. It was neither a too Christian unworldliness nor a lack of superstition that wrought Italian misfortune : it was the special political circumstances, the unthinking egoism of groups, and that crowning fatality of the Papacy which Machiavelli himself again and again recognised, though he always of necessity evaded it when he came to planning reconstructions.

VI.

When, however, we have said this much, we have completed the case against Machiavelli's credit as a

political thinker; and our criticism amounts to saying that he did not transcend his age, though he finally saw its life steadily and whole, and saw it with a new insight by the light of history, where other men lived and reasoned from hand to mouth. Nay, though he does not wholly rise above its preoccupations, he saw at times, as it were in spite of himself, that there were better courses than those he schemed, though his contemporaries could not usefully be asked to take them. Like Savonarola, like every other Florentine, he had planned constantly for the subjection of Pisa. Yet more than once he avows that such a policy is fraught with danger, even from the Florentine point of view. "Conquests," he says in one place, "are the ruin of weak republics";[1] and again he observes that the Venetians and the Florentines were respectively much weaker, the former after seizing Lombardy, and the latter after seizing Tuscany, than they had been when the sea and six miles of territory sufficed for their ambition.[2] The happiness of the imperial free cities in Germany, too, had impressed him deeply. He falls back on the reflection that, as regards the imperial cities, their luck lies in the restraining and conciliating function of the emperor, and that the case of Italy is unchangeably different, while as regards the ideal of a happy equilibrium it is practically negated by the mutability of all human affairs.[3] Thus his preaching of expansion and empire is not pure perversity: it is the decision of the practical man who recognises the inevitable tyranny of the actual, the insuperable force of the stream of tendency. In

[1] *Discorsi*, i, 6.

[2] *Id.* ii, 19. (Cp. the *Asino d' Oro*, cap. v.) He might have added that Milan, by its tyrannies over other cities, prepared its own bondage.

[3] *Id.* i, 7.

turning to the solution of the rule of one powerful prince, who should treat all subjects impartially, he was seeking the best he could conceive for all Italy.

When we say that the true ideal for Italy had been confederation, we must add acknowledgment of the fact that in 1548 the preaching of it brought Francisco Burlamacchi of Lucca to the scaffold.[1] Machiavelli knew too well what could *not* be accomplished by the men around him: he was content to prescribe what was conceivably within their powers. And it holds good through all criticism of his philosophic shortcomings that his discussion of actualities was a real beginning of men's education for a higher political life. He is practically the first modern writer to treat of political history as a process intelligible in terms of sequent and natural causation,[2] as apart from either theosophic or fatalistic conceptions. It was this attitude, of course, that brought on him the charges of atheism and paganism. A century and a half after the production of his *Florentine History,* Cromwell, the practical Englishman, imposes theosophy on every step of his action and his experience: Machiavelli at the end of the fifteenth century is already a Naturalist. Not that he was consistent. It is unlikely that he was an atheist, as said the chorus of his earlier critics. He was probably a "Lucretian" theist, believing in some distant divinity which certainly did not answer prayer or reward righteousness; and he so far conformed to his age as to retain some belief in prophetic prodigies.[3] But such limitations belong to the nature of all evolution; and Machiavelli is significant for his originalities. He prepares the way for Vico, for Montesquieu, for Voltaire, for Bentham, for Comte, for

[1] Burckhardt, *Renaissance in Italy,* Eng. trans., ed. 1892, p. 82.
[2] So Burckhardt, p. 82. [3] *Discorsi,* i, 56.

Buckle, for Spencer, for the sociology which shall include and supersede these. In this aspect, despite his restriction of his problem, and despite the constant pressure of his ideal, Machiavelli is essentially a scientific thinker: it was a law of his nature that he should seek the reasons of every historical development, and make historiography an intelligent exposition. In the *Florentine History*, although it was a prescribed and not a spontaneous work, he recognises clearly enough the great problem of the forces of class repulsion within every community; and if he had had time and encouragement to frame a complete theory of politics instead of practical handbooks for men of action, he was better qualified to have thought out all sides of the matter than any other man of his day.

For the rest, I cannot but count it partly an error to reproach him, as does Mr. Morley in his brilliant lecture, with being a mouthpiece of the spirit of violence. It is one thing to say how men must proceed in order to succeed or survive politically in a violent age: it is another thing to love violence for its own sake. Machiavelli studied deeply the art of war, and prescribed a military policy, because there was no other practicable line of energetic progress in his day; but even when he pleads the changefulness of human things as a reason for choosing to be the hammer rather than the anvil, he shows that if life had gone peacefully and scrupulously in his day, he never would have been the man to innovate towards strife and aggression. To turn to violence and aggression to-day as a result of his teaching would be like reverting to slavery on the plea of the authority of Aristotle. Lord Acton seems to approximate for a moment to Mr. Morley's censure when he writes that Machiavelli "obtains a new lease of *authority* from

causes that are still prevailing, and from doctrines that are apparent in politics, philosophy, and science ..... he is not a vanishing *type,* but a constant and contemporary influence." As who should say that Machiavelli is the typical jingo, or Bismarck, or aggressive modern Imperialist! This surely mishandles the case, as against a passage a few pages earlier in the same essay :—" He was simply a faithful observer of facts, who describes the fell necessity that governs narrow territories and unstable fortunes; he discovered the true line of progress and the law of future society; he was a patriot, a republican, a Liberal, but, above all this, a man sagacious enough to know that politics is an inductive science. A sublime purpose justifies him, and he has been wronged by dupes and fanatics, by irresponsible dreamers and interested hypocrites." Here, indeed, the balance is swung the other way; and one must almost demur to some of the claims. But the same accomplished critic says no more than the truth when he concludes with the decision that Machiavelli is "*more rationally intelligible* when illustrated by lights falling not only from the century he wrote in, but from our own, which has seen the course of its history twenty-five times deviated by actual or attempted crime."

There remains to be considered the further and more memorable criticism of Mr. Morley, that Machiavelli's saying, "the unarmed prophet always falls," proves him devoid of or blind to a moral faculty for reform such as was possessed by Calvin; and that if he had been in Jerusalem under Pontius Pilate he would have recognised no forces worth considering save those of the political authorities. It is Mr. Morley's high merit to keep steadfastly before his age the message of moral reason; and it is with grateful

recognition of his great service as well as entire concurrence in his ideal that I repeat here, on behalf of Machiavelli, a demurrer to the verdict under notice. The sufficient answer seems to me to be that, as regards the unarmed prophet, Machiavelli spoke for his day the simple truth. In his first diplomatic experiences he had realised how the "well-armed head of religion"[1] at Rome had a casting vote in all the politics of Europe. Nor did he at all ignore or overlook the degree in which moral forces might sway politics, for he expressly points to the case of Savonarola, whom he calls a great man,[2] as showing what might even then be done to sway a people by religious means, which Machiavelli was quite ready to see employed for his own political ideals. As for Calvin, he ruled, as Mr. Morley almost admits, no less by violence than by suasion; and his polity is not so pleasing, on any close scrutiny, as to make us regret that Savonarola did not permanently set up such another in Italy.

No doubt there is in some of Machiavelli's non-political writing a strain of moral perversity which serves to point every censure of his teaching. After reading his *Prince* and his *Discourses on Livy* one can hardly think of the *Mandragola* (over which Macaulay is so oddly enthusiastic) without being moved to ask whether the society there depicted was worth shedding blood for; whether the men there portrayed were conceivably capable of playing over again the drama of ancient Rome; and whether the cry of "*Virtù contr'al furore*" is not ridiculous as coming from the writer who painted them. It is with difficulty that we can give a hearing to the plea that,

[1] Letter of October 11th, 1500, cited by Villari, i, 259.
[2] *Discorsi*, i, 12.

as the prologue tells, he turned to levity because the problem of the public life set up despair. But here again the only just judgment is one which takes into view the moral tone of other societies of the same age. Spain and France were not morally higher or deeper than Italy; and a century later the English Elizabethan drama, not to speak of that of the Caroline Restoration, includes plays to the full as crudely licentious as the comedy of Machiavelli. The Italians, in fine, were morally as well as politically a product of their circumstances; and, even as no other race of their time could have managed any better than they the political problem of papal Italy, so neither could any other, so placed, have escaped their demoralisation. The greatness of Machiavelli consists in his having possessed an intellect unenfeebled by his environment, superior in total grasp and balance to any of his time, of any country; and in his having drawn light for men's paths from the very darkness of his world.

VII.

To know a man's published discourse is one thing; to know the man is another. No writer down to his day, perhaps, revealed his thought on public affairs more hardily than did Machiavelli; but such revelation does not necessarily carry with it a full disclosure of character. And as we have little or nothing of biographical description of Machiavelli from his contemporaries, we are set upon a process of inference to construct our complete notion of him. The natural first thought is to figure him in terms of his doctrine, as infinitely cool, wary, cynical in the ordinary sense of the term, and unswayed by passion save of the patriotic sort that surges up in the closing sentences of the *Prince*. It is, therefore, likely to be

with some shock of surprise that one meets for the first time with the conception of him presented in Merejkowski's novel, *The Forerunner*, in which he is somewhat prominent. There he is restless, excitable, mercurial, more like what we know Voltaire to have been than what we spontaneously imagine the author of the *Prince* and the *Discourses* to have appeared. But after some reflection one is led to acquiesce in the novelist's divination, of the sureness of which in other cases we have many instances.

Broadly speaking, great authors are never what their mere books would suggest to us; and this for the reason that we do not allow in advance for the physiological co-efficients of genius. A man's genius is his highest faculty functioning at its best; and a great faculty of literary statement, a high art of verbal presentment, physiologically implies a degree of physical and psychical sensibility which, contrasted with the ideal of mastery evoked by a great intellectual performance, either makes an impression of weakness or lack of balance, or discloses emotional qualities which were not easily to be divined from the product. All the authors who by biographies have been posthumously made well known to readers that formerly knew only their books, have set up disillusionment of some sort. Either the author is found likable by some who had disliked him for his doctrine, or he disappoints admirers by forms of frailty which they had never associated with his teaching. Doctor Johnson, Kant, Voltaire, Rousseau, Scott, Dr. Arnold, Lamb, Wordsworth, Byron, Coleridge, Goethe, Carlyle, Balzac, George Eliot, Dickens, Victor Hugo, Tourguenief, Tennyson—all as revealed in their biographies made many admirers raise their eyebrows. The teacher, the preacher, the humanist, the poet,

the novelist—each is found to combine with his gift, his ideal, his inspiration, qualities and tendencies unworthy of it. The golden-tongued poet is found to be often brusque and repellent in his own person; the preacher of serenity is chronically morose or splenetic; the dignified moralist frequently explosive and tempestuous; the idealist too often prosaic or grasping; the poised artist, who can detect and limn all forms of human weakness, surprisingly weak on his own account. The Johnson of Boswell astonished many who knew the Johnson of *Rasselas* and *The Rambler;* the Carlyle of Froude shocked multitudes who had worshipped the Carlyle of *Sartor* and the *Miscellanies.*

In compensation, some men who had made enemies by their writings have turned them into friends by the magnetism of their living personalities, or by the fuller revelation of a good biography. Diderot, Malthus, Southey, Macaulay, Buckle, Darwin, had one or the other fortune. And so we may conceive, with Merejkowski, that the Machiavelli who in his own writings seems to exhibit an abnormal coolness or callousness, was keen rather in Voltaire's way than in Frederick's or John of Lancaster's; was very human, very responsive, very sanguine at times, and very capable of being cast down. He is, in fact, revealed to us by his friends early in his diplomatic career as physically restless and changeable in a high degree;[1] a type not likely to harden into impassiveness, or to undergo torture without consequences.[2] Carlyle at his desk in an upper chamber rhapsodised

[1] Villari, i, 293, and notes.

[2] There is much sensitiveness in the face of the bust reproduced in Villari's *Life,* which appears to be made from a death-mask. The portrait in the Geneva edition of 1550 is a poor block, but seems to be compatible with the bust.

of greatness, heroism, fortitude, duty, and patience, and came downstairs to exhibit other qualities. Machiavelli, theoretically considered, may very well have mused in his study on a course of action for Cesare Borgia, and come out of it to act like a cheerful Florentine, guiltless of bad blood.

In his study, indeed, he becomes not a little of an artist, and this in more senses than one. A great writer he undoubtedly was. Of the sin of verbosity, the bane of modern Italian writing, and of the historical style of his contemporary Guicciardini,[1] he is entirely innocent; he is as terse as Dante, and has been not unjustly called the Dante of Italian prose. Again and again does Villari, himself so diffuse, recur enthusiastically to the theme of the energy and compactness of Machiavelli's diction. It was no unstudied triumph: in every instance in which his revision of his work can be traced, the whole effort is seen to be towards lucid simplicity,[2] the strength and concision of popular speech refined and perfected by the play of the literary sense. Thus did he win his enduring success in the very slough of poverty and frustration. Half his fame, it may be, was thus secured.

But the spirit of art in Machiavelli outgoes the province of form. No great poet in the modern sense of the word, he is something of a poet in the old sense of an inventor of action. It has been made clear that in several of his writings he plays the part rather of the poet than of the minuting secretary. Outrunning in his eager thought the slow

[1] At least in the *Storia d' Italia*. Signor Villari justly credits Guicciardini with simplicity and strength in other writings.

[2] "His corrections aimed at simplifying his style, and by force of simplicity enhancing its vigour and power" (Villari, ii, 438).

complications of the actual history, he composes, in his *Descrizzione* of Cesare Borgia's triumph over his enemies, a narrative which cannot be reconciled with his own dispatches to his Government, written from day to day while the episode was in progress.[1] It does not appear that he had anything to gain by the alterations, though they have the effect of magnifying the astuteness of Cesare. He had simply transmuted the half-fortuitous drama of the actual into something more sequent and symmetrical, in which the plotter's brain achieves more than in reality it did or could. Brooding intensely on the possibilities of politic craft, he imagines a schemer of more than Borgian sagacity, and ends by imposing that conception not only on outside readers but on himself. As Villari notes, his dispatches denounce Cesare in the mood of the natural man who recoils from cruelty and treachery. In the *Descrizzione* the artist has reconciled himself to his own creation of an ideal Borgia, too adroit to work evil save for good ends—the possible redeemer of Italy, the master of the impossible situation. And so it is that, in his so-called *Life of Castruccio Castracani,* he has framed not a historical narrative but an ideal sketch, making the kind of man he wanted to find. We are dealing with the imaginative conceptions of a man of genius far too sanguinely sympathetic to be for an hour the kind of spirit that he has been confidently held to be by uncomprehending enmity.

Either to this imaginative propensity or to a simple lack of proper painstaking is to be ascribed the number of mistakes in his account of early Florentine institutions in the *Istorie.* His originality does not

[1] Villari, i, 311–313.

take scholarly lines. For his learning as to the Roman and early Florentine periods he relies solely on his predecessors, Biondo Flavio and Giovanni Villani; and in his account of the constitutional beginnings he puts together, as parts of one planned construction, episodes far apart in time.[1] Always it is the schemer and constructor that overrides the historian; so that even the schemer's primary purpose of knowing what men actually have been is deflected by his already formed theories. It is when he comes to the fully-recorded period that his special power of comprehension and reflection comes into play; and the true Machiavelli illuminates the history of Florence as he had done that of Rome. As a mere historian he is little to be trusted. In telling the story of the famous revolt of the *ciompi* he actually invents an episode in order to exhibit Michele di Lando, the wool-carder, as an astute schemer, skilfully directing the tumult in which he came to the front.[2] Any such historical figure, offering the slightest promise of a saviour for Italy, be it King Theodoric or the Duke of Athens or the wool-carder, always moves Machiavelli on retrospect to an enthusiastic interest. In his history we are in the hands of an idealist.

It is thus intelligible that while his gift of luminous comment made his fellow-citizens value his dispatches and crave to have from him a history of their city, they never appointed him to the responsible office of ambassador. The ambassadors of Venice, we are told, surpassed him in their comprehension of diplomatic crises, and in forecasting the policy of potentates.[3] At this business the concrete-minded

[1] Villari, ii, 384–5, 397. [2] *Id.* ii, 410, 411. [3] *Id.* ii, 440.

Guicciardini outshone the man of speculative genius, who could theorise the causation of events in mass better than the character and caprice of individuals. And it is difficult to resist the verdict of Professor Theodor Mundt[1] that the description given by Machiavelli of German life in his *Ritratti delle cose della Alamagna* is so swayed by his study of the *Germania* of Tacitus as to make his testimony misleading. His faculty of comprehension had brought the ancients as near to him as the moderns; and having lived so long with Livy, he was the more readily spell-bound by Tacitus.

It consists with these tendencies that he again reveals himself as masterly and original when he handles the art of war and the laws of language.[2] Despite his premature depreciation of firearms, not unjustified by the experience of his day, his reasonings on tactics, drill, and fortification have won from modern specialists as high praise as any given to his sociology.[3] For his own day, there seems little doubt, his counsel was thoroughly sagacious. Yet it was his fortune, after having been tortured by the Mediceans on suspicion of undue devotion to the cause of liberty, to be finally discarded by the "people" in the final struggle after the expulsion of the Mediceans in 1527, on the score that he had served the Medici for Italy's sake. It thus came about that the man ranked as the supreme cynic and egotist of his era died broken-hearted because his fellow-citizens would not let him join in the last "free" polity of the city he had loved and served so

[1] *Niccolò Machiavelli und das System der modernen Politik*, 1861, pp. 218–220, quoted by Villari, ii, 439.

[2] On this see Villari, ii, 371–2. But the authorship of the *Dialogo* on the Italian language is very doubtful. See Mr. Louis Dyer's *Machiavelli and the Modern State*, 1904, pref. p. xiv, *note*.

[3] See the citations of Villari, ii, 291 sq.

well—died, too, in poverty, having never had more than a pittance for all his services.

These essential and illuminating facts of his life his alien detractors of the succeeding ages never knew; and by his fellow-citizens they were soon forgotten; to be made clear again in a happier age, to which his love for Italy was his first recommendation. Thus it comes about that the known Machiavelli of late posterity differs further from the pseudo-historic figure of Shakespeare's day than any personality ever did from the tradition of it. And there can be no question that the recovered figure is the real one. It is reconstituted from a multitude of traces, every one of which has been scrutinised. We have, it is true, no purposive contemporary account, none of those finished literary portraits which at once clarify our notions and bias our estimates. To make up for the lack of biography, however, there have been preserved, in addition to thousands of Machiavelli's official dispatches, a handful of his private letters, some of which do him little credit, and a number from his friend Buonaccorsi,[1] which also reveal him as living at times on the plane of the *Mandragola*. Were it not for the overwhelming discredit that had fallen on all clerical morality in Italy before and after his time, these glimpses of the seamy side of the life of men of his class would doubtless have been made much of against him. It was perhaps with an eye to the defensive that, in the *Mandragola*, he made his most lifelike character the genially rascally priest. Reviewing it all, we can assent to Macaulay's conclusion that the evil course of things political threw him at times into a vein of "desperate levity." Somewhat

[1] This correspondence, however, is to be read in the light of the remarks of Villari, i, 287.

so had the terror of the plague affected an earlier Florentine generation. But a man is to be known from his best hours, not from his worst; and among Machiavelli's letters to his friend Vettori there is one which, often as it has been quoted, must here be reproduced for the clear and lasting light it casts upon the real man. It was written in December of the year in which he had suffered torture, and in which he wrote *The Prince*.

> Since my last misfortunes, I have led a quiet country life, and, all counted, have not passed twenty days in Florence. I spent September in snaring thrushes; but at the end of the month even this rather tiresome sport failed me. I rise with the sun in the morning, and go into one of the woods for a couple of hours to inspect the previous day's work, and to pass some time with the wood-cutters, who have always some troubles to tell me, either of their own or their neighbours'. On leaving the wood I go to a spring, and thence up to my bird-walk, with a book under my arm, either Dante, Petrarch, or one of the minor poets, such as Tibullus or Ovid.....Then I betake myself to the inn by the roadside, chat with passers-by, ask news of the places whence they come, hear various things, and note the varied tastes and diverse fancies of mankind. This carries me on to the dinner-hour, when in the company of my brood I swallow whatever fare this poor little place of mine, and my slender patrimony, can afford me. Dinner over, I go back to the inn. There I generally find the host, a butcher, a miller, and a couple of brick-makers. I mix with these boors the whole day, playing at cards and dice, which games give rise to a thousand quarrels and much exchange of bad language, and we generally wrangle over farthings, and our shouting can be heard at San Casciano. Steeped in this degradation, my wits grow mouldy, and I vent my rage at the malignity of fate, content to let it crush me in this fashion, if only to see whether it will not take shame of its work.
>
> At nightfall I return home, and seek my writing-room, and, divesting myself on its threshold of my rustic

garments stained with mud and mire, I assume courtly attire, and, thus suitably clothed, enter within the ancient courts of ancient men, by whom, being cordially welcomed, I am fed with the food that alone is mine, and for which I was born, and am not ashamed to hold discourse with them and inquire the motives of their actions; and these men in their humanity reply to me, and for the space of four hours I feel no weariness, remember no trouble, no longer feel poverty, no longer dread death, my whole being is so absorbed in them.[1]

It was in these hours of better life, in his upper chamber, that the politician who had been on the rack wrote *The Prince*. The picture will not square with the Mephistophelean spectre conjured up by the imagination of the men of the North. What he lacked was precisely the deadly egoism with which they endowed him. Doubtless those humble, chattering neighbours, whose noisy disputes with him over cards he exaggerates in his Italian fashion, enjoyed his company. His nephew, brought up in his house, loved him, and in absence is always craving letters from him, which he affectionately writes, usually ending them with "Christo ti guardi." His wife, when he is away, writes him with warm devotion, saying how dull the house is without him. There is no basis for the tradition, accepted by Macaulay, that his marriage was unhappy.[2] And though there are examples enough of personages who did harm publicly and were good family men, these testimonies to the human goodness of Machiavelli are surely worth more than the blatant inventions of aliens who never even read his books. It was not the best men who reviled him. Greene, who vilified him above all the English penmen of

[1] Trans. in Villari's *Life and Times*.

[2] Cp. Villari, i, 287.

Elizabeth's day, was a drunkard, a liar, and a companion of thieves. Frederick the Great, who began the modern movement of declamation against him, does not finally compare with him to advantage as man or as statesman. To-day, in a world grown somewhat better, and consequently somewhat less given to evil speaking, he meets with a worthier reception, even such as the mute ancients gave and had from him in his library by night. And what he said of himself, so characteristically, so humanly, with such a humorous pathos, after he had borne with fortitude the torture of the rack, may express our revised estimate: "I am really pleased with myself, and think there is more in me than I ever before believed."[1]

[1] Since these pages were put in type, I have met with the able treatise of Mr. Louis Dyer, *Machiavelli and the Modern State* (Ginn and Co., 1904), of which the judgments so frequently and so powerfully corroborate those here put, that I regret to have been unable to cite them. Mr. Dyer's book may be recommended to any reader desirous of knowing Machiavelli better.

BACON

I.

In face of the untiring perversity of the cult of Bacon-Shakespeare, one is moved at times to wonder whether Bacon is going to be made permanently ridiculous by his wilder devotees to the extent of losing what credit he had among other people. His sad prayer for "men's charitable speeches" and the esteem of "the next ages" has at last been answered with a vengeance. Once started by Miss Delia Bacon and Mr. Nathaniel Holmes, the strange fantasy which doubled the too discursive speculator and the preoccupied Chancellor with a hard-working playwriter in a mask has been kept on foot by a series of enthusiasts, impostors, and dupes, till it would seem that the exposure of the grossest frauds is but a way to call into play the faith of new fanatics. Popular spiritualism is the only parallel to that prodigy of error.

It is all very well to say that such an exorbitance of esteem testifies to a great force of intellectual magnetism. But who are they that are magnetised? The importance of Joanna Southcott is measured by that of her worshippers; and if Bacon's power of appeal to judgment were to be divined from the reasonings of those who make him out to have written all the Elizabethan drama and Montaigne's Essays and Burton's Anatomy to boot, his fame would be in a perilous case. Happily for its duration, the man who has evoked the oddest of modern crazes had

earlier won the entire devotion and service of one of the sanest minds in all literature; and never did one writer do more for the vindication of another than Bacon has had done for him at the hands of James Spedding.

So great is the service that one can now hardly think of Bacon the man without calling up the personality and the performance of his biographer and champion. Before Spedding did his work of defence, Bacon was made known to the unstudious English-speaking race mainly by the portrait drawn of him in Macaulay's essay. It is a masterpiece of zealous injustice and impassioned untruth. To the fixing of a conventional calumny Macaulay brought all the fervour a disciple could give to the vindication of a beloved master. The spectacle is one that gives colour to the worst detractions ever made from his literary honour; and if it were not clearly to be accounted for as one of his divagations, his moral credit in this connection would to-day justly stand as low as he sought to put Bacon's. The true account of Macaulay is not that he was either a "hard-mouthed sophist" or an impeccable judge, but that he was a man of vivid first impressions and much self-complacency, who, apart from his official work, rarely reached a judgment by a judicial process, and was hardly at all capable of anxiously reconsidering a prejudice. With his large share of general good sense he usually judged with fair accuracy at first sight; but where he had grown up in a conviction, or had once committed himself to a verdict, and someone challenged him to a revision of sentence, his prejudice reacted with the spontaneity and inequity of an instinct. All his well-nourished self-love at once took arms to make good the rightness of his past way

of thinking; and the more evidence and argument were adduced to confute him, the more perverse became the sophistry with which he obscured facts and evaded reasons. Where he happens to be right, no man is more broadly judicious in showing as much; where he happens to be wrong, he is wrong with the obstinacy of a strong man playing the child. His is the fatality of the confident, undisciplined intelligence that has never been sobered by remorse for error, never been abashed to profound misgiving by a large vision of human fallibility. Intellectually, he never quite grew up. Well might his favourite clincher be "Every schoolboy knows": to the end he never quite got out of the schoolboy's way of knowing.

With regard to Bacon, it is clear that, as Spedding divined, Macaulay had early taken as an article of his literary faith the egregious line of Pope:—

> The wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind.

It was just the kind of judgment to suit his hit-or-miss habit of estimate; being done in his own fashion of laying on the black and the white of a character so as to produce rather the motley of a harlequin than the interfluent lights and shadows of a living nude. His was indeed not the eye to see the monstrous paralogism of the collocation "wisest, brightest, meanest"; but had he only chanced to approach Bacon in youth under a favourable prepossession, and later to look at Pope's line with a perception of the plain streak of sneak in that poet's own character, he would have been as ready as any to realise that Pope was not the judge to accord with authority any one of his three superlatives to any man. Having, however, come to his maturity in the ordinary literary opinion, Macaulay felt the defence of Bacon in Montagu's

edition to be a flout to his judgment; and he set himself to meet it in the spirit in which he later met those who challenged his iniquitous way of trying the case of William Penn.

The result is a triumph of special pleading that is a scandal to literature. All the rhetorical powers and expository gifts of a first-rate platformer are bent to bluffing the jury, perverting the facts, garbling the defence, and dexterously playing the saddened censor of a great man's faults, till by a thousand cumulative touches of falsification, missing no opportunity for distorting incident or motive, there is wrought by wayward prejudice a comprehensive slander which wilful malice could hardly outgo. For nearly a generation it dazzled all save the best readers, till the cloud on Bacon's name seemed to have become an ineffaceable stain. But against this formidable indictment there was at length set up the most masterly rebuttal by which a great slander was ever met, the work of one of the justest reasoners that ever dealt with a problem of character and conduct. Lucifer, so to say, had met Ithuriel.

It is but fair to remember that Spedding did not fight alone. The vindication begun by Montagu was ably reinforced by Thomas Martin, whose *Character of Lord Bacon: His Life and Works* (1835) is still worth reading; and when Macaulay's essay had for most readers served to overbear that defence, and to float the piously hostile *Life of Francis Lord Bacon* by the Rev. Joseph Sortain (1851), Hepworth Dixon produced in his brilliant *Story of Lord Bacon's Life*[1]

[1] It will be observed that all three works misname Bacon, as does Macaulay in his essay. The author of the *Novum Organum* was Francis Bacon, entitled Lord (or Baron) Verulam, and Viscount St. Alban.

(1862), a vindication at least as effective as the attacks. But Dixon's book, though visibly embodying much research, is in its turn too forensic, too partisan, too unjudicial, to constitute a lasting record. Where others make everything tell against Bacon he makes everything tell for him without qualification, glosing or suppressing the record of Essex's early championship of his friend, as if the final case for Bacon were not strong enough to bear all that pressure; and so presenting the story of Bacon's fall as to make it out a mere martyrdom. It is in making good his vindication without any such straining at any point that Spedding achieves his unique success—a success unshaken by the subsequent reiteration of the hostile view in the two volumes of Dr. Edwin Abbott.

In this connection it is much to be deplored that Mr. Sidney Lee, in the study of Bacon included in his volume, *Great Englishmen of the Sixteenth Century,* should have pronounced Dr. Abbott's book "the best summary" of Bacon's life and work,[1] without even making a reference to the performance of Spedding. Such a case is not fitly to be so disposed of, any more than by the deliverance of Dean Church[2] that Spedding sought to make us revere as well as admire Bacon, and that "it is vain. It is vain to fight against the facts of his life; his words, his letters." To such cathedral proclamation the answer is that the issue is not one between revering and contemning: it is between accepting and rejecting such a sentence of denigration as Dr. Church places in the forefront of his book, before his readers have had from him a word of evidence. Dr. Church's pronouncement is too much in the manner and spirit

[1] *Great Englishmen,* p. 213.
[2] *Bacon,* in the "Men of Letters" series, p. 3.

of the pulpit to avail with thinking men. Mr. Lee's is a surprising oversight on the part of a student wont to look round his problems before coming to his conclusions. In the name of literary justice good readers will refuse to let such a claim as Spedding's be thus put aside.

II.

To read the *Evenings with a Reviewer* is to experience a long-drawn satisfaction of a kind that perhaps no other book can give, and to appreciate once for all the truth of the high praise passed upon Spedding by those who knew him. "He was the Pope among us young men—the wisest man I know," was the notable if not decisive verdict of his friend Tennyson;[1] and I have sometimes wondered whether Spedding might not be the "clear-headed friend" of Tennyson's early poem "To ——," whose "kingly intellect" was to feed wasted truth "until she be an athlete bold." "An athlete bold" is, indeed, hardly the description of the truth as nourished by Spedding; rather he makes us think of the unassuming swordsman who attempts few exploits, but, when forced into a combat, holds his own with unwearying arm till the challenging bully is driven from the lists. There is in his conduct of Bacon's defence a vigilance of scrutiny, a security of handling, that realises every ideal Macaulay misses, and that lets us see how fitly the brilliant Lady Ashburton put the impression he made on his companions:—

> I always feel a kind of average between myself and any other person I am talking with—between us two, I mean;

[1] *Memoir*, by his son, 1-vol. ed. p. 32.

so that when I am talking to Spedding I am unutterably foolish—beyond permission.[1]

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about Spedding's work of vindication is the simple fact that a man of such rare capacity as his was content to give virtually his whole life to the restoration of one other man's fair fame. If we compare him with any of his contemporaries, he holds his own as to the general suggestion he makes of power and knowledge. In his early career as a Government official all men with whom he came in contact testified warmly to his value; and it was evidently the unanimous consent of his friends as to his fitness for the greatest undertakings that made them almost cold to what he actually achieved. His own account of that matter is humorously pathetic:—

> I have long been aware that to ninety-nine hundredths of the reading public, including about nine-tenths of my own particular friends, the most satisfactory intelligence with regard to my immortal work would be that there is no more to come, and that I might have made that announcement at the close of any volume without danger of detection.[2]

That is, indeed, how serious literature is apt to fare in England; though, happily, there are now some thousands who can appreciate Spedding's Life of Bacon. And the presumption is that that attitude among his friends was largely due to their insuppressible conviction that he was made for greater things than writing any man's biography. They resented the devotion of such a life to such a task. The *Evenings with a Reviewer* was written about 1846, and printed only for private circulation, Spedding having resolved that the world should have the

[1] Lord Houghton, *Monographs*, cited by G. S. Venables in pref. to Spedding's *Evenings with a Reviewer*, 1881, i, p. vii.
[2] Letter cited by Mr. Venables, p. xvi.

complete Life of Bacon, with all the documents, before it read this crushing answer to Macaulay. In the end, the book was published only in 1881, thirty-five years after its composition, and a few months after his accidental death. Of those thirty-five years nearly thirty were mainly occupied by his edition of Bacon's Works (with the co-operation of Ellis and Heath) in seven volumes, and the stupendous *Letters and Life* in seven volumes more. No wonder that his most admiring friends, who had been eager to have him accept a good Government office when it was tardily offered him, resented such a use of powers that they considered equal to anything.

And we are left asking, Was it worth while—worth all that while? Was it finally fitting that one of the wisest and most intellectual men of his day, living to seventy-four years, should leave as almost his sole product a perfect edition of Bacon's works, and the most thorough research that patience and devotion could accomplish in regard to his life? Was the wisdom shown in the work shown also in the choice and prolongation of it? One is at a loss to answer. Of Spedding it is told[1] that, while he knew thoroughly the English history of the reigns of Elizabeth and James, he knew in detail no other history, and was tranquilly content, despite his academic culture, to be ignorant of many things that ordinary people were supposed to know. "He was in the habit of saying that he got undeserved credit for knowledge, because no one could believe that such a man could be so profoundly ignorant.....It was true that he deliberately abstained from the study of subjects in which he felt no concern."

[1] By Mr. Venables, p. xviii.

It would seem, then, that his wisdom was of that balanced kind described in Stevenson's *Will of the Mill*, too sufficient for itself to permit of any intellectual adventure. Had it not been for his unique interest in Bacon, the *grande passion* of his intellectual life, Spedding might conceivably have gone through his days as a capable but unconspicuous Government official, without accomplishing anything in literature beyond a few more miscellaneous "Reviews and Discussions," and a little more of intelligent, but not epoch-marking, study of Shakespeare. The price of his poise of character and judgment was a general freedom from enthusiasms—or, let us say, that general detachment that could let him concentrate his powers on one serene and studious enthusiasm through a whole generation. His friend Fitzgerald, indeed, regarded the enthusiasm as special to the first years of the task.

> I am very glad [he writes] to hear old Spedding is really getting *his* share of Bacon into print. I doubt if it will be half as good as the *Evenings*, where Spedding was in the *Passion* which is wanted to fill his Sail for any longer Voyage.[1]

But if *Passion* ebbed, and zest sometimes flagged, Spedding's loyalty to his work never gave way. We can but say that there must have been something remarkable about the man whose work and personality, after two hundred years, could so possess such a follower; and that, had Bacon been able to foresee the coming of such a biographer and champion for him after such a lapse of time, he might have felt an elation that would have made light all his latter-day load of care and humiliation. And, saying that, we

[1] Fitzgerald's *Letters and Literary Remains*, 1889, i, 280.

turn with the more interest to consider what manner of man it was who could work such an admiration in such a mind.

III.

After Spedding's exhaustive analysis and confutation of the Macaulay libel, the problem of Bacon's character is happily simplified. We know now that he verily was not the heartless, servile, self-seeking hypocrite of the reviewer's effigy, but a man who managed his life, in difficult days, up to the moment of his one serious miscarriage, with honour and dignity. He was not, as Macaulay so unscrupulously made out, mean-spirited and sycophantic; he did not timorously truckle to the Queen after boldly opposing in Parliament the policy of her ministers; he was not selfishly disloyal to his friend and benefactor; he was not a wanton renewer of judicial cruelty, or a wilful perverter of justice in the King's behalf; he was not even an ardent advocate of the bad financial device of trade monopolies.[1] On the principal of these points Macaulay has merely suppressed truths and accumulated false facts; and it is to the general discredit of English letters that men who in youth sat at Macaulay's feet should still give forth their prejudice as critical judgment, without an attempt to rebut the massive defence which disposes of it. In this fashion Mr. S. H. Reynolds, in his introduction to the Clarendon Press edition of Bacon's Essays, doggedly repeats the old aspersions without a word of argument against the refutations. Making some charges which are just, he throws out also crass

[1] As one of those misled by various writers on this minor issue, I have to make my personal retractation.

imputations which no evidence could prove, declaring, for instance, that Bacon "shrank from no baseness which seemed likely to help him on his way";[1] and that he was "a gross and shameless flatterer, in an age of gross flatteries."[2] The self-confuting power of malice has seldom been better exemplified than in this writer's pronouncement that "For accuracy of detail Bacon *had no care whatever,* and this again may be set down as probably *part of his craft.*"[3] For considerate men, such reckless incrimination is its own answer. It is time to try to set a reasoned judgment in place of rhetoric.

What does hold good of Bacon is, first, that in an age when the superstition of monarchism not only flourished as it has done since, but was a force vitally affecting the most eminent individual lives, he found his life laid in the central sphere of the influence of the throne, and that, having to bring his great intelligence into touch with the character and will of the King as any ordinary man might, he presents the anomalous spectacle of greatness subordinate to littleness. Secondly, being unduly careless about money matters all his life long, he latterly allowed the profuse expenses of his great households to grow upon him till it became a convenience to him to take gifts from suitors, albeit he never perverted justice on their behalf. It was a species of misconduct probably committed by most of his predecessors, and by not a few judges among his contemporaries; and there is no good reason to doubt the proudly sad claim, privately made by him after his disgrace: "I was the justest judge there was in England these fifty

[1] Clarendon Press edition of *Essays,* 1890, Introd. p. xxxiv.
[2] *Id. ib.* [3] *Id.* p. xxvii.

years," to which he appended the stoical confession, "It was the justest censure in Parliament that was these two hundred years."[1] Coke never took untimely gifts, so far as we know; but Coke was certainly not even potentially a just judge,[2] though a great lawyer.

Indeed, we cannot measure Bacon aright until we realise what an order of men they were among whom he lived, and how few there were in it who could decently cast a stone at him. If we look broadly and justly at his and their characters in mass, comparing them in point of equity, public spirit, humanity, and conscientiousness, so far from placing him low we shall be tempted to call him the best no less than the ablest of the public men of his day. Hardly one of them will bear an inquest: the leading spirits of the days of Elizabeth and James will as little satisfy modern standards as do the men of the Restoration. The crazy Essex, the unworthy Leicester, the unstable and untrustable Raleigh, the crafty Howard and Cecil, takers of Spanish bribes; the flashy favourites of James, one of whom, Buckingham, many times sought to sway the Chancellor's decrees; Bacon's official enemies, Cranfield and Williams, men essentially corrupt where he was but technically so, and finally disgraced as he never was—the whole generation were morally unworthy even to be his associates; and Coke was his inferior as judge[3] and as man no less than as mind. No decision of Bacon's was ever

[1] First transcribed by Spedding, *Evenings*, ii, 345–6.

[2] Compare the accounts of him by Gardiner, *History*, ii, 333, 338–341, and by Spedding, *Evenings*, i, 129; ii, 2, 209; and the admissions of his panegyrist Roscoe, *Lives of Eminent British Lawyers*, 1830, pp. 2–6, 24–25.

[3] Bacon in his first four terms as Chancellor made 8,798 decrees, in his second year 9,181, and gave more general satisfaction than any judge of his time. Dixon, pp. 336–8 and refs.; Martin, p. 280 and refs.

reversed on the score of bribe-taking;[1] and his "corruptness" consisted in taking fees and gifts while cases were pending, whereas the more careful judges took theirs by rule at the recognised times.[2]

Despite the many attempts of Buckingham to dictate his judicial decisions—attempts the failure of which surely goes far to vindicate his judicial rectitude—the utmost that systematic hostility can now charge against him is that in one case he modified a decree under pressure; and in that case the assertion that he "deliberately perverted justice" is not at all made out.[3] When we realise his position, at the mercy of a king ignobly ruled by unscrupulous favourites, surrounded by conscienceless suitors and merciless enemies, we are weighed upon by a sense of the hardness of the fate that led the lover of knowledge and wisdom to seek in such paths and places to forward his plans for human enlightenment and his hopes for the better government of his country. At his worst he was a high spirit among the low, cast in a world where nobleness was almost the surest bar to public usefulness, and where any man who would

[1] Dixon, p. 474; Martin, p. 279, citing Rushworth; Spedding, *Evenings,* ii, 341–5.

[2] See Martin, pp. 274–7; Dixon, pp. 366–70.

[3] Abbott, *Francis Bacon,* Introd. pp. xx–xxix, and pp. 268–9, 296. Cp. Spedding's *Letters and Life,* vi, 443–5, vii, 5–6, and Mr. Heath's letter in App. to vol. vii. Despite Mr. Heath's investigation, the case remains very obscure, and a careful lay reader will be slow to acquiesce in Mr. Heath's professional view of it. A lawyer is apt to be the last to realise how often it would be fitting to reverse judges' decisions, however informally. In the one case in which such reversal ought most obviously to take place—that of an innocent man found to have been condemned in error—officialdom never retracts, but absurdly "pardons." It should be added that Spedding did *not,* as Dr. Abbott asserts, admit that he had been wrong in his view of the case in question, but simply deferred to the opinion of Mr. Heath, his legal co-editor. What Mr. Heath *proves* is not injustice, but suspicious informality.

influence for good the courses of power must learn some measure of dissimulation and craft.

Nothing, however, can clear Bacon of grave censure for the folly which at once stained his ermine, delivered him over to his enemies, and abated his credit as a teacher. It is on that score alone, finally, that his character is seriously affected; for the old condemnation of his conduct towards Essex, endorsed and magnified by Macaulay, will not bear revisal. If we compare the measure meted out to Bacon in this matter by so many critics with the common absolution of Becket from the charge of ingratitude to his master, and of Pym from the charge of ferocity towards his old friend Strafford, we cannot but be conscious of an invidious and inordinate severity. To say, as Macaulay virtually does, that Essex's gift of an estate to Bacon ought to have bought Bacon's withdrawal from the prosecution,[1] is really to quash the other charge against him for taking gifts as a judge from suitors. Essex had himself received from Elizabeth gifts ultimately estimated at £300,000—a reward monstrously in excess of his very problematic services; and for services not at all problematic he gave Bacon an estate worth £1,800. When Mr. Sidney Lee writes that the Earl "quixotically judged himself in honour bound to compensate Bacon"[2] for the lack of the office he could not get for his protégé, he ignores at once Bacon's actual service to Essex and the latter's own financial history. If Bacon, a devoted servant of Elizabeth, in days when devotion to the Crown often went step for step with devotion to country, was

[1] In the stress of his sophistry Macaulay becomes blind enough to argue that Bacon should not have served the Queen as he did, because she had never been liberal to him, whereas Essex had been.

[2] *Great Englishmen*, p. 221.

guilty of private treason to Essex in officially conducting a just prosecution against him for an act of the grossest public lawlessness, involving the gravest danger of civil disorder, it would be interesting to know what is the measure of Essex's offence in turn against his benefactress. To palliate Essex's wanton and senseless sedition, and vilify Bacon's grave conduct of his public duty, is to commit an injustice such as Bacon never had part in.

To-day we can perhaps best account for Essex's whole career by saying that, never wise though often magnanimous, he was finally cracked.[1] This is the solution suggested by the spectacle of the lives of his mother and sisters, notoriously the most neurotic women of their time;[2] and, indeed, to a modern mind the story of all four tends to set up a sense of troubled compassion which has not yet appeared among the historians, though Bacon seems to have felt it.[3] But as men go, Essex was impossible. With such a man Bacon could not finally do aught save what he did; and Macaulay, in declaiming to the contrary, is virtually contending that an intellectually great man like Bacon was fitly to be bound for life to the fortunes of a chivalrous court favourite because the latter had for a time duly appreciated him and had partly rewarded his great services. Bacon, in accepting the reward, had expressly stipulated that it should not bind him to the giver. Macaulay in effect claims for the favourite, whose own vast rewards were so lightly come by, exactly the devotion at which he sneers when it is given by Bacon to the Queen. Yet, as Spedding shows, Essex had ceased

[1] Cp. Abbott, *Francis Bacon*, 1885, pp. 71, *note*, 73, 81.
[2] Cp. Dixon, pp. 120–1.
[3] Dixon, pp. 177–186, 191–3; Spedding, *Evenings*, i, 181–2.

to take counsel from Bacon long before his insane revolt. At the trial, nevertheless, Bacon strove to save him from himself; and only the insane plea of not guilty forced the friendly accuser to press the crushing proofs of guilt.

IV.

The utmost that can now be urged against Bacon in regard to Essex has been put by Dr. Edwin Abbott in his works on Bacon, of which the larger was published four years after Spedding's *Evenings*. In that work Dr. Abbott repeats, among other charges, a very grave one originally laid by Jardine, as to Bacon's having malevolently struck out of the report of the trial the passages of testimony which went to show that the conspirators had not intended to raise the City. That charge of bad faith had been fully and convincingly rebutted by Spedding, who shows[1] that the very testimony in question was fully reproduced in the official *Declaration*, and that the omissions from the evidence were clearly made by way of saving certain third parties who would thereby have been implicated. To this rebuttal Dr. Abbott makes no reference whatever; and the circumstance throws grave doubt on the whole of his argumentation against Bacon. It is the bane of our literary criticism that it more often than not takes no account of contrary opinion, adding only so many yeas and nays to a prior heap, instead of scrutinising all in the spirit of universal science. Spedding wrought for science inasmuch as he thoroughly sifted the criticism before him; and those who after him claim to rejudge the case without doing as much are destined to be overruled.

[1] *Evenings*, i, 193–202.

When we test Dr. Abbott on the gravest issues, he breaks down so thoroughly that trust in his judgment ceases. He undertakes in both of his books to show that Bacon's vindicatory account in the *Apology* of his relations with Essex is discredited on a comparison of its narrative with one of his actual letters. The *Apology* states that Bacon had many times dissuaded Essex from accepting the command of the Irish expedition: the letter of March, 1599, acquiesces in his acceptance of it. But anyone who, satisfied as the present writer was with this *prima facie* case, proceeds to examine the whole matter, will find that the discrepancy is apparent only. A perusal of the whole of Bacon's letter[1] will show that instead of being, as Dr. Abbott alleges or implies,[2] a counsel to Essex to accept the command, it is only an acquiescence in the decision finally taken, accompanied by a few encouragements and more warnings. In so far as it touches on the topics which Bacon later says he had used as dissuasions, the turning of these same illustrations to purposes of encouragement is perfectly compatible with a different use of them at an earlier stage, especially on the part of one who, like Bacon, had a positive bent to "antitheta." The letter is in fact obviously that of a friend who had *not* counselled the course taken, but was now seeking to make the best of it, as a good friend would. And Dr. Abbott, after arguing that on the face of the letter Bacon had not recently sought to dissuade Essex, and that as late as March 12th it was still possible for him to withdraw, obliviously admits that Bacon *had* "desired

[1] Spedding's *Letters and Life*, ii, 129–133.

[2] *Bacon and Essex*, 1877, pp. 97, 105–115; *Francis Bacon*, 1885, p. 58. The latter book puts the imputation less explicitly than the former.

to divert" Essex from ruin, but that the Earl *could not* draw back, and that "he probably seemed to Bacon, *even early in 1599*, inextricably intertangled." *Solvuntur tabulæ.* Dr. Church, equally swift to condemn, goes no deeper into the analysis of the documents. Yet, while asserting that "when Essex went to Ireland Bacon wrote only in the language of sanguine hope," he admits that, "anxious as he may have been, he could not have foreseen Essex's unaccountable, and to this day unintelligible, failure."[1]

That Bacon in his later *Apology* may have fallen into errors of memory in describing his relations with Essex is primarily credible: few men in such a case could be trusted so to recall the past that everything which might tell against them should be made prominent, or even clear. But Dr. Abbott, reiterating as he does the old pleas that Bacon need not have taken part in the trial, and that he showed a gratuitous malice, misses the true inwardness of the matter, revealed by Spedding. He cannot see that Bacon had on public grounds the strongest motives for throwing himself on the side of order, and that he was justly resentful of Essex's vain and unexpected plan of pleading innocence where the proper course was to plead guilty. The student has but to read Spedding's analysis of the case after Abbott's in order to see that, whatever may have been Bacon's later slips of memory or minor inconsistencies, his main course was as justifiable as Essex's was the reverse. Dr. Abbott on his part keeps out of sight all the damning record of Essex's plotted treasons of that very period,[2] concerning which the Earl had

[1] *Bacon*, p. 41.

[2] Cp. Spedding, *Letters and Life*, ii, 167 sq., 206 sq.; *Evenings*, i, 110; Dixon, pp. 150–151 and refs.; Church, *Bacon*, p. 41.

given no hint to Bacon, who would there and then have renounced him had he known of them. Not knowing them, Bacon in actual fact pleaded on his behalf with the Queen while he was in disgrace over his misdoings in Ireland and his forbidden return thence, and advised him for his good up to the first explosion.

Dr. Abbott, in short, weights the scales on one side as Dixon weights them on the other. He commonly, howbeit decorously, plays the devil's advocate, nearly always seeking the worst construction for Bacon's acts. After reproducing Gardiner's narrative of the proceedings against the goldsmiths and silk mercers in 1619, in the interests of the court monopoly of gold and silver thread, he carefully omits the historian's remark that "such, at least, is the story in the only form in which it has come down to us. It rests upon Yelverton's evidence, which Bacon never had an opportunity of correcting."[1] Even Professor Gardiner goes too far when he assumes that the Proclamation of 1619 on the subject of the monopoly in question "may fairly be taken as Bacon's defence of himself." We know (1) that in 1620 Bacon concurred with Montagu, Coke, and other legal authorities, in advising the abolition of all monopolies;[2] and (2) that he spoke in the House of Lords to the effect that in regard to the gold and silver thread monopoly "Sir Henry Yelverton [had] advised the same to be resumed into his Majesty's own hands, and by indentures to authorise divers to govern the same"; that the Council had consented; and "that the authority granted by the king was much abused in the execution

[1] *History of England, 1603–1642*, iv, 19.
[2] Spedding, *Letters and Life*, vii, 197–208.

thereof, to the intolerable grievance of the subject."[1] This utterance, overlooked by the historian, quashes his inference. But Dr. Abbott's animus exceeds a stretch of inference: it so colours his whole narrative as to exclude it from the high category to which Spedding's belongs; and his industrious injustice at times leaves even a worse impression than does the Old Bailey manner of Macaulay.

One who so eagerly presses every possible inference to Bacon's disadvantage cannot be leniently judged when he gainsays himself. Early in his inquiry[2] Dr. Abbott affirms that Bacon showed "an invariable pliancy in the presence of great persons," and "had no political backbone, no power of adhering to his convictions and pressing them on unwilling ears." In support of this he can but cite some of Bacon's subtleties of negotiation with Elizabeth and with Buckingham; tactics which Bacon, like most men of his day, learned to regard as indispensable at court, but which were so far from being natural to him that in his youth, by the critic's own admission, he "took no trouble to disguise his sense of superiority" to his acquaintances,[3] though in middle life he saw reason to resist his acquired propensity to compliment.[4] And the critic has cited (1) Burghley's opinion of his nephew's "pride" at twenty-five; and (2) Essex's account, ten years later, of Bacon's "freedom and plainness which he hath used with me, and, in my knowledge, with some other of his best friends." Further, Dr. Abbott has commented (3) on "the lofty tone adopted by a young barrister of three-and-twenty in addressing his Sovereign."[5] Finally, after asserting

[1] *Id.*, citing the Lords' Journals.
[2] *Francis Bacon*, pp. 21, 22.
[3] *Id.* p. 32. [4] *Id.* p. 33. [5] *Id.* p. 20.

that Bacon's pliancy "disqualified him for the task of giving wise and effectual counsel," Dr. Abbott forgetfully confesses, in regard to Bacon's counselling of James, that "do what he might, he could not have completely succeeded; for he could not have persuaded James to change his nature."[1] It is bad enough that the abundant sagacity of Bacon's counsels in parliamentary strategy should be ignored; but that he should be belittled for his very anxiety so to accommodate himself to the time as to guide the two capricious and headstrong monarchs to whom he had to sacrifice himself, is not justly to be borne. Tried by Dr. Abbott's standards, Machiavelli would stand disqualified for counsel, and Burghley and Colbert be classed as failures. From these verdicts of D.D.-dom one returns with a new zest to the wise page of Spedding, where candour yields moral inspiration, and good-will doubles intelligence. There we learn to know Bacon for what he was, neither a paragon of nobility nor a prodigy of baseness, but a man with high purposes and many high instincts, yet flawed by foibles like his best brethren, and at some points morally blind even as they were, yet not otherwise than they.

V.

Mr. Sidney Lee, who, as we have seen, unfortunately takes Dr. Abbott for his guide through the problem of Bacon's character, builds up an indictment against him in terms of his own precepts of worldly prudence as set forth in his books. Here we have one more application of the critical method by which Machiavelli was made out a virtuoso in murder.

[1] *Id.* p. 216.

"Bacon," says Mr. Lee, echoing Dr. Abbott and Macaulay, "sacrificed all ordinary considerations of honour in his treatment of Essex. But his principles of active life deprived friendship of meaning for him. The material benefit to be derived by one man from association with another alone entered into his scheme of self-advancement; and self-advancement was the only principle which he understood to govern 'the active stage of affairs.'"[1] And again: "At all hazards he must advance himself, he must build up a material fortune. If the intellectual work to which he was called were to be done at all, no opportunity of securing the material wherewithal was he justified in rejecting. That is the principle which inspired Bacon's attitude to politics as well as to law; that is the principle which inspired every action of his life outside the walls of his study."[2] "He was not prepared to sacrifice any chance of material advancement to his principles. If his own political views proved unacceptable to those who could help him on, he must substitute others with which the men of influence were in fuller sympathy."

For this systematic ill-construction of the whole of Bacon's public life, what is the justification? Apparently some of his own counsels to other men similarly placed. "He drew up a series of maxims, a series of precepts for getting on, for bettering one's position—for the architecture, as he called it, of one's fortune. Of these precepts, which form a cynical comment on Bacon's character and on his conception of social intercourse, this much may be said in their favour—that they get behind the screen of conventional hypocrisies." Let us try to do what Bacon is

[1] Work cited, pp. 223-4.

[2] *Id.* p. 218.

said to have done; and ask what his cynical precepts really amount to.

Going in his scrupulous way over the field of "learning," Bacon handles, with a minuteness which, to a modern reader, suggests naïveté quite as often as craft, all the aspects of conduct on which he thinks treatises ought to have been written; and in his survey of the possibilities of "Culture of the Mind" he comes to what he calls "Civil Knowledge," "a subject which of all others is most immersed in matter, and hardliest reduced to axiom." This he divides into "three parts, according to the three summary actions of society, which are Conversation, Negotiation, and Government." Under the first head he deprecates any great anxiety about reserve and self-suppression. "If behaviour and outward carriage be intended too much, first it may pass into affection [*i.e.*, affectation], and then *quid deformius quam scenam in vitam transferre*—what more unseemly than to be always playing a part—to act a man's life? But although it proceed not to that extreme, yet it consumeth time, and employeth the mind too much. And therefore, as we use to advise young students from company keeping by saying *amici fures temporis*—friends are thieves of time—so certainly the intending of the discretion of behaviour is a great thief of meditation."

Thus far, and yet further, the talk is as that of a garrulous old man of affairs, prattling sagely to his grandson; and the only criticism to be passed is an avowal of mild wonder, despite the excellence of the writing, as to why Bacon thought it all worth the writing out—why he could not be content to leave such matter in the inkbottle. But still he goes endlessly on, gravely fluent, quoting and commenting a

series of the proverbs of Solomon, and another series from the ancients, all by way of teaching ingenuous youth how to suck eggs. It is just such worldly-wise talk as wise men and wiseacres had made current before Solomon's time and since. "We will begin therefore with this precept, according to the ancient opinion, that the sinews of wisdom are slowness of belief and distrust; that more trust be given to countenance and deeds than to words; and in words, rather to sudden and surprised words than to set and purposed deeds." Harm there is none in the discourse, unless it be that it tends with supererogatory zeal to rob life of spontaneity, and to realise Voltaire's comment on "the insane project of being perfectly wise."

But when we come in our perusal to that grim saying ascribed to Bias, but doubtless older than Hammurabi—a saying adopted by Philo Judaeus and embodied in a Spanish proverb: "Love your friend as one who may one day be your enemy: hate your enemy as one who may one day be your friend"—we have tapped that vein of sombre prudence which crops up somewhere in the life of all of us; and if anyone thinks fit to cry out "Cynicism," we can but say, Would that it were. This seems to be the gist of Bacon's offence, as adjudged by Mr. Lee. We may appreciate a generous impatience with such withered wisdom; but is the open parade of it a proof of heartless craft, an incapacity for honest friendship, or a mastering bias to duplicity? Rather we recur to the characterisation of naïveté. Men think so in our own day, but do not think of taking the world into their confidence. The man who elaborates such rules of wisdom is doing a work of *bon foi*. Thus did Montaigne, with a difference. Even as Machiavelli

reduced to comparative decency of statement the principles on which worse men thought they had to work as rulers in Renaissance Italy, so Bacon raised to stately gravity of diction the rules of behaviour by which the best statesmen of his day in England were wont to steer their course. To suppose that he was introducing any novelty of dissimulation into English court life is to harbour an illusion which must stand in the way of all comprehension of our problem. Be it noted, too, that Bacon expressly qualifies all he has to say in this connection with the caveat: "Neither doth learning admire or esteem of this architecture of fortune otherwise than as of an inferior work: for no man's fortune can be an end worthy of his being, and many times the worthiest men do abandon their fortune willingly for better respects."[1] Under this qualification the whole discussion should be read.

It is presumably by misadventure that Mr. Lee, in pressing his case, presents in quotation marks (p. 220), as a single extract from Bacon, the following:—

> Have openness in fame and repute, secrecy in habit; dissimulation in seasonable use, and *a power to feign if there be no remedy;* mixture of falsehood is like alloy in coin of gold and silver which may make the metal work better."

Of this sentence, the first half (with "repute" for "opinion") is taken from the end of Bacon's essay *Of Simulation and Dissimulation;* while the second half comes from the essay *Of Truth;* where, however, it is followed by the words, "but it embaseth it." Needless to say, these words are used not in praise but in dispraise of falsehood. Mr. Lee must have mixed his notes. As for the clause italicised, it is simply such a counsel as every prominent politician in our own

[1] Ed. cited, p. 155. Cp. *De Aug.,* B. viii, ch. i. *Id.* pp. 594–5.

time puts in practice every day. "Dissimulation in seasonable use" is but a way of saying, archaically, "Give not thyself away"; and the "power to feign if there be no remedy" is an accomplishment as common in private drawing-rooms as in those of palaces. If the whole of the essay be read, it will be found that this closing passage is the putting of a middle course after plainly stating the disadvantages as against the advantages of simulation. Once more, the explanation of such writing is not excess of craft, but defect of it. Talleyrand and Metternich would never have dreamt of publishing such maxims, precisely because they constantly acted on them. Bacon, doubtless, learned to comport himself warily as a man of affairs. He had need do so if he would remain one. But in seeking to save other young men the long delay which had beset his own career by reason of his youthful directness of speech, he was revealing at once the adventitious character of his own diplomatic discipline and the disinterested simplicity, the single-minded devotion to "learning," which inspired so much of his literary diligence. The old charge of disloyalty to Essex cannot be thus re-established. Untenable on its merits, it cannot be saved by citing Bacon against himself.

We can now judge aright of the estimate which Mr. Lee, still following Dr. Abbott, puts upon Bacon's career as a politician under James.

> Had Bacon been a high-minded, disinterested politician, withdrawal from the King's service would have been the only course open to him; but he had an instinctive respect for authority, his private expenses were mounting high, and he was at length reaping pecuniary rewards in the legal and political spheres. Bacon deliberately chose the worser way. He abandoned in practice the last shreds of his political principles.....He made up his mind to remain a servant of

> the Crown, with the single and unpraiseworthy end of benefiting his own pocket.[1]

Many of us, I doubt not, will sympathise with the spirit of Mr. Lee's pronouncement, while unable to acquiesce in it. Insofar, of course, as it puts everything upon Bacon's mere craving for income, it must be rejected as palpably unfair. The real issue is as to whether Bacon chose ill in staying at his post, whatever were the state of his finances. As to this, the student of Elizabethan and Jacobean history must surely feel that Mr. Lee is judging of Bacon's problem as he might do of that of a politician of our own time. The situations differ immensely. Mr. Lee, in his *Life of Queen Victoria,* courageously asserts of that sovereign lady that she dressed plainly, and with not much taste. In Queen Elizabeth's age, not only could he not have said as much, even were it true: he would not have dreamt of saying it. And the political possibilities differed proportionally. A statesman who in these days feels that by remaining in office at a given juncture he will be led into sacrificing principles by which he lays store, will certainly do well to resign. Whatever he may apprehend as to the course of affairs, he need not fear a national cataclysm. There is room for a constitutional Opposition as well as for a Ministry: the play of the two forces is the accepted condition of parliamentary life. Politicians, even "statesmen," abound; and nobody is indispensable. But in past times, when parliamentary capacity was "yet in the go-cart," when constitutional Opposition was either undeveloped or inefficacious, statesmen must many times have felt bound to hold to office at the cost of a heavy strain on their notions of good policy. Lord North seems to

[1] Work cited, p. 229.

have felt thus constrained when he carried out the policy of George the Third in regard to the American colonies. Perhaps he was wrong, even from the political standpoint of his own age. But Walpole, before him, could justly enough feel that he must stay in power, despite forced departures from his principles, if the State were to be well managed; and we have the circumstantial assurance of the third Earl of Shaftesbury that when his grandfather, the first Earl, pronounced the odious maxim, *Delenda est Carthago,* in regard to the existence of Holland, he was obeying the King and Cabinet, and disobeying his own better judgment.[1]

Be this true or not, if any statesman were ever justified in staying at the elbow of an unwise King, for fear of mishap to the State in case of his retirement, Bacon was entitled so to defend his service under James. Let any reader who doubts it follow the whole story as it is told by Spedding, keeping in mind what actually did happen in the next generation of English politics, and he will hesitate to take sides with Mr. Lee. Such a withdrawal on Bacon's part as Mr. Lee would prescribe would have been an act of sheer stoicism, not to say pessimism—a turning away from an evil world, to leave it to go to perdition as it would. Such stoicism or pessimism, no doubt, would be dignified enough, on the part either of Bacon in his perplexity, or of Machiavelli in his. But when we find such men incapable of taking comfort in a withdrawal into privacy while the State reels towards ruin, we are really not entitled to brand them with unworthiness because they bow to necessity

[1] See the third Lord Shaftesbury's letter to Le Clerc, given in Dr. Rand's *Life, Unpublished Letters, and Philosophical Regimen of Lord Shaftesbury,* 1900, pp. 332–3; from *Notes and Queries,* 1851, p. 97.

and seek to make the best of a marred destiny. If we insist on such a verdict, we are but flying in the face of life. There is hardly a leading statesman in the modern world who has not at times felt that he must adapt himself to perverse conditions, and do what he may when he cannot do what he would. We may fairly infer that the sensitive spirit should shrink from statesmanship altogether; but we may not pass judgment as does Mr. Lee on men who have entered the arena knowing what it is, and who decide to remain men of action under the actual circumstances.

The criticism of Mr. Lee, finally, is reduced to something like absurdity by Dean Church, when he says of Bacon: "He chose to please man, and not to follow what his soul must have told him was the better way. He wanted, in his dealings with men, that sincerity on which he insisted so strongly in his dealings with nature and knowledge. And the ruin of a great life was the consequence."[1] When it is thus solemnly alleged that lack of sincerity tends to ruin the lives of public men, detraction becomes derisory. The common sense of mankind testifies to the contrary. If lack of sincerity in dealings with men were ruinous in Dr. Church's own profession, ecclesiastical biography would be truly tragical reading. What ruined Bacon was not the wearing of such a mask as forms part of the stock-in-trade of as many modern theologians as modern politicians; nor the vulgar insincerity which stamps the characters of half the public men of Bacon's day, and of Elizabeth to boot. Of these he was guiltless. He fell, as men have fallen before and since, because of a folly that was beneath his character as it was

[1] *Bacon*, in "Men of Letters" series, p. 4.

beneath his precepts; and because of the mischance of being found out. When we are judging a disrobed judge, let us be just.

VI.

Returning to Bacon's real deflection from right conduct, let us look in that direction for the clue it is likely to give to his psychology. Exorbitant expenses come of a sanguine way of speculation, a habit of dreaming great things and over-estimating one's command of the actual, coupled with a taste for multiplicity in some kinds of possession. Such a conjunction of tendencies might have been surmised in Bacon when, about the age of thirty-seven, though engaged in the queen's service, he contrived to be arrested for a debt of £300, owed to a goldsmith and money-lender.[1] It was the omen of his career; and here his mental and his material life are as it were of a piece. His doctrine was above all things a proclamation of the abundance of knowledge and mastery of nature to be obtained by methodical and sedulous inquest; and insofar as he supposed himself to have directly contributed to such knowledge and mastery he has almost completely failed. This failure, fully acknowledged by Spedding,[2] is the outstanding fact in Bacon's position as a thinker. To have won a spacious reputation as a new instaurator of science, a widener of the bounds of man's dominion over things, and yet to have missed some of the most available concrete truths and promulgated an abundance of concrete error—this is the paradox of Bacon's fame.

[1] Dixon (pp. 160–1) makes out that the arrest was illegal, but this is sufficiently unlikely.

[2] "His new *organum* or logical machine, which to us is only a name and appears to have been a mistake" (*Letters and Life*, vii, 474).

And it is not to be solved save by realising that just as his immediate practice in his economic life was a concession to his proclivities and a lapsing from his ideals, involving the frequent breach of his own rules for the conduct of judges, so his handling of the separate problems of nature was a gratification of his instinct of possession rather than of his clear abstract sense of justice in inference. Perhaps no man has more luminously arraigned the normal intellectual vices, the tricks of self-deception, the levities of prejudice: to this day nothing is more commonly remembered from his writings than his vivid enumeration of the *idola*[1] of the cave, the tribe, the theatre, the forum. And yet to one or other of these idols, in the popular sense of the term, he makes frequent sacrifice.

His snare arises, as aforesaid, in the sphere of his genius, his specific energy. Wherever he had the data of a problem fully before him, his gifts of generalisation and comprehension and utterance came victoriously into play; and thus it came about that in Parliament, where other men were devious or short-sighted, he saw and reasoned with a sureness that made him at once a commander in counsel. In him the discursive or intellectual nature was so nearly paramount that the ordinary passions which root in ordinary interests had no disturbing force; hence his abnormal sagacity in nearly all matters of public policy. But this very sufficiency of judgment, where he had to measure himself against the judgments of other men of affairs, wrought for his miscalculation of his faculty in the more occult problems of nature. In

[1] By which Bacon did not mean objects of worship, but *phantasmata* or false notions as contrasted with true "ideas." Cp. Hallam, *Introd. to Lit. of Europe,* Pt. III, ch. iii, § 60; Ellis, Gen. Pref. to Bacon, *end.*

his youth he had so fully digested the moral and intellectual "colours of good and evil"—to use one of his own labels—that his early collection of antithetic apophthegms,[1] the *pros* and *cons* of human qualities and conduct, reads like the harvest of a life's experience; as do many of his earlier essays, which have all the wise-browed weight of ripe meditation. Thus he must early have felt his reflective superiority to most of his fellows, though he mock-modestly says of his antitheta that they "show a juvenile warmth," in that they "abound in the moral and demonstrative kind, but touch sparingly upon the deliberative and judicial."

When, however, he inferred from his superiority in civics a similar superiority in physics, and "took all knowledge to be his province," he committed an error of capital importance. The inferiority of other men's judgment in civics was at once the measure and the witness of his supremacy, since men's judgments were in the last analysis the material of the research, the subject of the science. But when he would get behind the formidable reserve of nature he had no such advantage. He contemned other men's judgments here as elsewhere, but the problem for him and them alike was extraneous to human issues, and other men's inadequacy gave him no certificate of competence. Presuming as he did thus to dispose of the occult as easily as he did of the obvious problem, he never achieved more in it than to discourse with an inspiring suggestiveness, and to impugn other men's presumption while himself proceeding presumptuously. Free of the ordinary passions, the ordinary prejudices of social interest, he was now under the

[1] In the *De Augmentis*, B. vi, ch. 3, § 12.

rule of his intellectual prejudice, the bias which in him stood for all the egoisms of ordinary men. Thus all his work on the theme of natural science included, to use his own phrase, "a tincture of the will and passions."

VII.

The nature and tendency of his error may be readily seen on a reading of his *Wisdom of the Ancients*. Scanning the fables of old mythology, he assumed that he comprehended them *prima facie*, even as a biologist has said the ordinary instructed person sees in a leaf "a flat green object that we know all about already"; and the result is a series of *a priori* interpretations which never once come in sight of truth. The allegories he divines were never there; myths are simply not what he imagined them to be; and he has illustrated absolutely nothing but his gift for fanciful thought, unbridled by historic tests or comparative method.[1] Turn the same kind of apriorism upon the riddles of nature, and you get the multitude of vain explanations with which he accompanies his appeal to us to search for explanations. He has trusted his sagacity to give him the solution where he has not laboured to compass the data; though he has again and again insisted, as against other men's malpractice, that "those who determine not to conjecture and guess, but to find out and know; not to invent fables and romances of worlds, but to look into and dissect the nature of this real world,

[1] This was partly discerned by his admirer Vico, who undertook to restate the case, but had little better success. See also the criticism of Kuno Fischer (*Francis Bacon*, Oxenford's trans., 1857, pp. 190–200, 375–7), which was not known to me when I wrote the above. Dr. Fischer modestly suggests that only the German mind could reach sound views of Greek mythology. It happens that they were reached by Fontenelle before any German.

must consult only things themselves."[1] And if it be thought unlikely that a man who so clearly saw and pointed the right way should wholly depart from it, let the doubter read the early essay, "Of Expenses," wherein are laid down with masterly precision the perfect rules of private economy, and then note that a habitual deviation from the most essential of those rules is the sole explanation that the essayist's wisest biographer can give of the financial neediness which ultimately brought him to malfeasance and to open shame.

It may truly be said of him, indeed, that with all his spontaneous power and his unparalleled diligence as Chancellor, he did not set himself hard intellectual labours, rather letting his mind work as it would because it worked easily, and tasking it only by way of cataloguing minutiæ, never by way of an intense analysis. Thus, even his life-philosophy has finally the character of his set of acute "antitheta" rather than of a reduction of complexity to a general truth. It is typified in the two essays, "Of Atheism" and "Of Superstition." In the first occurs the famous saying that "a little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion"[2]—a facile falsism, on which one can but exclaim, What a multitude of atheists there must be! To the ordinary paralogism of the design argument he adds the suicidal sophism (1) that "atheism is rather in the lip than in the heart of man," inasmuch as "atheists will ever be talking of that their opinion, as if they fainted in it within themselves, and would be glad to be strengthened by the consent of others"; and (2) "what is most of all,

[1] *De Augmentis*, preamble: Shaw's trans.
[2] Repeated in the *De Augmentis*, B. i.

you shall have of them that will suffer for atheism and not recant; whereas, if they did truly think there were no such thing as God, why should they trouble themselves?" By that trick-test every fulmination of Bacon against an error is a proof of his unfaith in his own doctrine, and every Christian missionary and martyr is at heart an unbeliever. Nay, by that test Bacon himself is condemned past hope, for throughout half his works he is perpetually affirming to himself the superiority of the Christian creed over dead paganism —a gratuitous contention, where there was no gainsayer. As for the gloss "The Scripture saith 'The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God'; it is not said 'The fool hath *thought* in his heart,'" it would be hard to match it for catchpenny quality in the vast literature of comment.[1]

Yet, after the inexpensive summary that "as atheism is in all respects hateful, so in this, that it depriveth human nature of the means to exalt itself above human frailty," we have in the next essay the obviously more sincere reflections that "it were better to have no opinion of God at all than such an opinion as is unworthy of him"; and that "atheism leaves a man to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws, to reputation; *all which may be guides to an outward moral virtue, though religion were not;* but superstition dismounts all these, and erecteth an absolute monarchy in the minds of men." It would be hasty to surmise that the man who wrote this was shamming when he wrote the other: the antitheses are put down with the unconcern of unconsciousness; but he is not

[1] These points are brought out more diffusely in the Latin essay *De Atheismo,* which appeared among the *Meditationes Sacrae,* with the first essays, in 1597. The essays on "Atheism" and "Superstition" as they stand were first given in the edition of 1612; and that on "Superstition" thus appears to be the later composition.

to be acquitted of insincerity, in the sense of speaking differently in different intellectual moods for lack of having thought out his problem. And to say this, in such a matter, is to say that he has not carried philosophy far.

If, indeed, we compare any of Bacon's representative works with any of Descartes's, we cannot but be conscious, despite the contrary verdict of Leibnitz[1] on their notions of the atom, that the Frenchman is the closer analyst, the deeper and harder thinker. And whereas the protestations of orthodox faith in Descartes's works are by way of deliberate safeguard against persecution, Bacon's bifrontal attitude on religious matters seems rather to stand for a divided mind and an alternating opinion. Again and again he remarks on the obstacles put in the way of science by theology;[2] yet he not only stands to the scholastic shibboleth of a two-fold truth,[3] thus giving theology an arbitrary status outside of reason: he further reverts habitually to the language of prayer and invocation, and can do so within a page or two of the declaration that "God works nothing in nature but by second causes."[4]

Such inconsistencies, however, are to be looked for in all thinking before Spinoza,[5] especially in the reasoning of one who expressly refrained from attempting a new philosophic system.[6] Bacon is not

[1] See it cited by Ellis and Spedding in pref. to the *De Principiis* (Bacon's Works, Routledge's ed. p. 643).

[2] *Novum Organum*, Aph. 62, 65, 89, 96.

[3] *De Augmentis*, B. i; B. ii, ch. 11; B. iv, ch. 3; B. ix; *Novum Organum*, Aph. 65, 89; B. ii, *end.*

[4] *De Augmentis*, B. i.

[5] And even Spinoza wrote in 1665: "Nor do I deny prayer to be very useful to us, for my intellect is too small to determine all the means which God has, whereby he leads men to the love of him—that is, to salvation." *Epist.* xxxiv (xxi).

[6] *Novum Organum*, pref.

to be judged by his theism, any more than by his attitude to James I, both being in terms of the limitation of all metaphysic and ethic in his time. As little, of course, is he to be disposed of by noting the shortcomings of his physics. But we shall miss all relevant criticism, all comparative measurement of him, if we fail to note with some exactness how he really stood as a scientific pioneer.

VIII.

As to the shortcomings of Bacon where his critical pretensions were highest, there can be small dispute after the signally candid avowals of Mr. Spedding, who, having handed over to Mr. Ellis the work of appraising the master on his scientific side, thus loyally accepts the result :—

> It is impossible, I think, to read Mr. Ellis's remarks upon those parts of his works in which he comes in contact with what we call the exact sciences.....and not to feel that in the faculty of *distinguishing differences*.....he was (comparatively at least) deficient. This appears both from the imperfect account of the existing condition of those sciences which he gives in the *De Augmentis Scientiarum;* no notice being there taken of some of the most important advances which had been made by the writers immediately preceding him; and from his own experiments and speculations upon subjects which required their help. Though he paid great attention to Astronomy, discussed carefully the methods in which it ought to be studied, constructed for the satisfaction of his own mind an elaborate theory of the heavens, and listened eagerly for the news from the stars brought by Galileo's telescope, he appears to have been utterly ignorant of the discoveries which had just been made by Kepler's calculations. Though he complained in 1623 of the want of compendious methods for facilitating arithmetical computations, especially with regard to the doctrine of Series, and fully recognised the importance of them as an aid to physical inquiries, he does not say a word about Napier's Logarithms,

which had been published only nine years before, and reprinted more than once in the interval. He complained that no considerable advance had been made in Geometry beyond Euclid, without taking any notice of what had been done by Archimedes and Apollonius. He saw the importance of determining accurately the specific gravities of different substances, and himself attempted to form a table of them by a rude process of his own, without knowing of the more scientific though still imperfect methods previously employed by Archimedes, Ghetaldus, and Porta. He speaks of the "Eureka" of Archimedes in a manner which implies that he did not clearly apprehend either the nature of the problem to be solved or the principles upon which the solution depended. In reviewing the progress of Mechanics, he makes no mention either of Archimedes himself or of Stevinus, Galileo, Guldinus, or Ghetaldus.....He observes that a ball of one pound weight will fall nearly as fast through the air as a ball of two, without alluding to the theory of the acceleration of falling bodies, which had been made known by Galileo more than thirty years before. He proposes an inquiry with regard to the lever—namely, whether in a balance with arms of different length but equal weight the distance from the fulcrum has any effect upon the inclination—though the theory of the lever was as well understood in his own time as it is now. In making an experiment of his own to ascertain the cause of the motion of a windmill, he overlooks an obvious circumstance which makes the experiment inconclusive, and an equally obvious variation of the same experiment which would have shown him that his theory was false. He speaks of the poles of the earth as fixed, in a manner which seems to imply that he was not acquainted with the precession of equinoxes; and in another place of the North Pole being above, and the South Pole below, as a reason why in our hemisphere the north winds predominate over the south. This list, for which I am entirely indebted to Mr. Ellis's prefaces and notes, might probably be increased; but the instances enumerated are sufficient to show not only that Bacon was ill-read in the history of those branches of learning (and yet it was in this direction that science was making the most real and rapid advances), but also that upon such subjects his ideas were not clear: this latter defect being no doubt the cause of the

other: for, where he could not readily follow the steps of the investigation, he could hardly appreciate the value of the result.[1]

To this list Dr. Fowler *does* add a number of other instances, which I will put summarily.

1. Bacon believed, with qualifications, not only in Natural but in Judicial Astrology.

2. He has many "curious and absurd speculations on 'spirit.'" (*E.g., Nov. Org.* ii, 40.)

3. He evidently believed that air and water, under certain conditions, were mutually convertible. (*Nov. Org.* ii, 48, 111.)

4. He held that fountains originate in the condensation of air within the hollow parts of the earth. (*Hist. Densi et Rari,* and *Nov. Org.* ii, 50, 3.)

5. He makes no mention of Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood, which Harvey (then Court physician) began to teach in 1616.

6. He shows complete ignorance of the theory of projectiles, though it had been partly cleared up by several writers, one of whom (Digges) dedicated his book to Bacon's father.

7. He believed in the existence of bodies having positive levity, and held that air has no weight.

8. He held that sulphur and mercury pervade the universe, and are the very foundation of matter.

9. He gave his countenance to many of the most absurd fancies of his time, as that water is congealed into crystals; that an ape's heart, "applied to the neck or head, helpeth the wit, and is good for the falling sickness"; that some sorts of bracelets comfort the spirits, "and they be of three intentions—refrigerant, corroborant, and aperient," and so on.

[1] Pref. to the *De Interpretatione Naturæ Proœmium,* in *Works,* iii, 510–512, where see the references.

And still the list is far from complete, for the Bohn editor notes, among other miscarriages, these :—

1. Bacon classes comets among meteors, whereas Seneca in antiquity had classed them with the planets, predicting that the regularity of their motions would yet be proved. (*De Augmentis*, ii, 3; *Nov. Org.* ii, 35.)

2. He speaks of astronomy as being degraded by the application to it of mathematics. (*De Augmentis*, iii, 4.)

3. He falls into the fallacy of saying that "wood and metal are not equally cold" (*Nov. Org.* ii, 13, 1), and that "heat is somewhat averse to a tangible mass" (*Id.* par. 40).

4. He alleges that "cold contracts and narrows every substance" (*Id.* ii, 20, 1), overlooking even the familiar case of water.

5. He was inclined to believe that the moon was nothing more than illuminated vapour (*Id.* ii. 36).

To take one more instance, he twice lays it down that the phosphorescence sometimes seen in the sea is due to its being struck violently by the oar, or agitated by storms (*De Aug.* iv, 3, end; *Nov. Org.* ii, 12)—a futility of hypothesis nothing short of childish, inasmuch as he uses the expression "sometimes," thus implicitly admitting that mere concussion is demonstrably not the cause of the phenomenon.

Finally, he can be extremely careless in matters of literary history, on which he writes as dogmatically as on scientific themes.

The record of blunders and absurdities could easily be still further lengthened; but quite enough has been said to show how precarious was Bacon's knowledge, how over-confident his temper, how far short his mode of judgment fell of scientific circumspection,

and how little he did in his own practice to rectify the fallacious methods of which he so eloquently complained.

IX.

To show this much, however, is not to show all. It will perhaps strike the dispassionate reader, even in reading the list of errors and oversights, that after all they are committed by a man more wont to question phenomena, more habitually alert to the mute beckonings of Nature, than all save one in a million of his fellows. To speculate fallaciously is part of the lot of all pioneers: the prime requisite of the truest pioneer is that he shall be given to speculation. Most men, during myriads of years, have looked on the cedar and the hyssop, the flower and the leaf, the whole vast arabesque of nature's significances, with eyes that at best merely noted fact and pried hardly at all for cause. To many, if not most, of Bacon's earlier readers his sleepless questioning of things must have seemed to tell of a strangely unquiet mind; and we can gather from his reiterated allusions to the hindrance put by theology upon science[1] that he had been often met by solemn reproof for presumption, as inquisitive children are still met at times by dull parents. And this unremitting curiosity, to begin with, must have counted for new life among those who could feel the spell of the questioner's speech.

True, he half undid his service by his opinionated disparagement of some who, without his genius for utterance, and with less than his range of interests, patiently plumbed a single mystery, and so laid for

[1] *Valerius Terminus,* par. 8; *Filum Labyrinthi* (the English tract of that title), 7; *De Augmentis,* B. i; *Novum Organum,* B. i, Aph. 62, 65, 89, 96, etc.

their fellows some fixed footing in the chaos of ill-explored Nature. Thus he girds more than once at Gilbert, who virtually established the science of magnetism by experimental methods, where Bacon, advocating just such methods, established nothing.

> Some men become attached to particular sciences and contemplations, either from supposing themselves the authors and inventors of them or from having bestowed the greatest pains upon such subjects, and thus become most habituated to them. If men of this description apply themselves to philosophy and contemplations of an universal nature, they wrest and corrupt them by their preconceived fancies, of which Aristotle affords us a signal instance, who made his natural philosophy completely subservient to his logic, and thus rendered it little more than useless and disputatious.....Gilbert, too, having employed himself most assiduously in the consideration of the magnet, immediately established a system of philosophy to coincide with his favourite pursuit.[1]

And again :—

> Men generally make their experiments carelessly, and as it were in sport, making some little variation in a known experiment.....nay, if they set to work more seriously, steadily, and assiduously, yet they waste all their time on probing some solitary matter, as Gilbert on the magnet, and the alchemists on gold. But such conduct shows their method to be no less unskilful than mean; for nobody can successfully investigate the nature of any object by considering that object alone; the inquiry must be more generally extended.[2]

There is no defending these passages: they are perverse, inconclusive, and misleading. Bacon was but finding formulas to buttress his prejudice, as when he elsewhere dogmatises thus :—

> And it is likewise evident that although the opinion of Copernicus about the earth's rotation cannot be confuted by

[1] *Novum Organum*, B. i, Aph. 54. [2] *Id.* Aph. 70.

> astronomical principles, because it agrees with phenomena, yet it may be rebutted by natural philosophy.[1]

In other words, Bacon would not be a Copernican; and if he could not refute the Copernican argument he would overrule it *a priori*. If mathematics helped Copernicus, then mathematics must in turn be disparaged. Gilbert was a Copernican, so Gilbert must be discredited as a mere specialist. Nothing has done more than these presumptuous follies to bring Bacon into scientific disfavour.

Spedding, indeed, defends Bacon from the charge of unfairness to Gilbert; and it behoves us to think twice and thrice before differing from him. But here we are finally compelled to do so. In his admirable preface to the short *De Interpretatione Naturæ Proœmium*, where he admits that Bacon's attitude to the new astronomy was that of "a man who does not thoroughly understand it,"[2] he writes that Bacon "could follow Gilbert in his inquiries concerning the loadstone; and he was not silent about him, but refers to him frequently, with praise both of his industry and his method, censuring him only for endeavouring to build a universal philosophy upon so narrow a basis"; and in two letters to Whewell he elaborates this defence. Whewell had written to Spedding that Bacon "borrowed from Gilbert..... images as well as thoughts, as I have.....shown;"[3] and added: "Almost the only matter for which I find reason to blame him is his injustice to Gilbert, whom he scarcely ever mentions, except to blame him for the narrowness of his method,[4] but whose

[1] *De Augmentis*, B. i, ch. 4.
[2] *Works*, iii, 516.
[3] *Life of Whewell*, 2nd ed. p 355.
[4] Mr. Lee (*Great Englishmen of the Sixteenth Century*, 1904, p. 248) says that Bacon "ignored" Gilbert's researches. This is an overstatement.

philosophy was really almost as wide as Bacon's own, and solid precisely on account of his starting from such a reality as magnetic force."

Spedding replies first that Bacon *expected* greater results from his method than Gilbert did, and that *this* "saves him from the charge of injustice to Gilbert";[1] and Whewell admits the expectation. In a second letter[2] Spedding represents Bacon as regarding Gilbert "(without the least thought of disparaging him, *but* honestly and seriously) much as you might regard a man who," having carefully made out the law of the ebb and flow of his native river, should on that bare basis frame a theory of tides without studying the oceans. But this really does not amount to a vindication: indeed, the wording of the passage last quoted amounts to a confusion of language. Firstly, Bacon only once or twice praises Gilbert[3]—once for an "excellent" remark about heavy bodies losing downward motion as they recede from the earth; again for his "diligence"; but the latter praise is followed by a disparagement of Gilbert's perfectly sound and memorably original view that the earth is a magnet; and in half a dozen places Bacon speaks of him with something like contempt, and this where, yet again, Gilbert was right and Bacon wrong. Thus, after approving Plutarch's remark that there might well be solid bodies apart from the earth, he writes:—

> But Gilbert has indulged this thought to such excess as to assert that not only the earth and moon, but many other

[1] *Life of Whewell*, p. 358.

[2] *Id.* p. 361.

[3] *Descriptio Globi Intellectualis*, ch. vii, par. 4; *De Fluxu et Refluxu Maris*, near end. The diligence is also admitted in *Nov. Org.* B. i, Aph. 54.

> solid and opaque globes, are scattered amid the shining globes throughout the expanse of heaven.[1]

Again he groups him with those ancients who in his opinion "destroyed and confounded system" by reasoning that "the earth was a planet and movable, and as it were one of the stars";[2] and in several other passages he speaks of him with disrespect.[3]

Now, not only was Gilbert right and Bacon wrong where they differed in their conclusions, but Bacon's account of Gilbert as basing his whole philosophy on magnetism is untrue. Indeed, it lies on the face of the case that Gilbert followed the best movement of thought in his day, and embraced opinions which he could never have deduced from his study of the magnet. Finally, Bacon never once shows any appreciation of the greatness of the results which Gilbert actually reached in his special research. Therefore, though Whewell finally leaves his blame of Bacon's hostile attitude to Gilbert (in the *Philosophy of Discovery*),[4] balanced by an account of him in the *History of the Inductive Sciences*[5] as having "frequently praised" Gilbert "as a philosopher," we must reluctantly but definitely sum up that Spedding for once did not hold the balances quite evenly. He had better have admitted that Bacon erred.

Dr. Fowler, following De Morgan, urges that the Copernican theory was not really substantiated till Galileo, Kepler, and Newton had done their work, and that many of the Copernicans had no very good reasons for their opinions.[6] But this does not excuse

[1] *De Principiis atque Originibus*, par. 10.
[2] *Descriptio Globi Intellectualis*, ch. vi, par. 1.
[3] *Novum Organum*, B. i, Aph. 54, 64, 70; *Advancement*, B. i.
[4] Ed. 1860, pp. 114–115. [5] Ed. 1857, i, 297.
[6] Introd. to *Novum Organum*, pp. 31–33.

the plain animus of Bacon's tone towards Gilbert; and it makes somewhat light of Bacon's constant pretension to be clearing the path for new truth. Like Dr. Whewell, Dr. Fowler disputes Hume's statement that Bacon "rejected, with the most positive disdain, the system of Copernicus": there was rejection, says Dr. Fowler, but not disdain. Yet he can but cite the passages in which Bacon indicates past hesitations, or puts his denial moderately,[1] arguing for the rest that to say of the theory of the earth's diurnal motion "*quod nobis constat falsissimum esse*"[2] is to be "far from exhibiting the most positive disdain." It is hardly worth while to debate such an issue: Hume's words are nearer the truth than Dr. Fowler's "far from"; and Bacon's *At multo fortasse justior movetur controversia,*"[3] which Dr. Fowler does not quote when citing the context, is again of the nature of "positive disdain"; as are the passages already cited in which Bacon disparages Gilbert for his revival of the belief in the earth's motion.

More to the purpose is it to point out, as Dr. Fowler does, that in the *Descriptio Globi Intellectualis* Bacon brings against the original form of the Copernican theory some arguments so cogent that they helped to bring about its later modification. But the commentator leaves standing his significant admissions that "Bacon appears, in early life, like the majority, probably, of his contemporaries, to have conceived a strong *prejudice against* the

[1] *Novum Organum,* ii, 35, 36, 48 (17); *De Augmentis,* iv, 1; *Thema Cœli; Descriptio Globi Intellectualis.*

[2] *De Augmentis,* iv, 1. It is fair to note that the Bohn translation (a revision of Shaw's) in this passage exaggerates Bacon's language, inserting the word "extravagant" where there is no epithet at all in the original; and that again in the passage, iv, 1, it has "may easily be exploded" where the original says only "revinci.....posse."

[3] *Novum Organum,* ii, 48 (17).

Copernican theory," and that after some hesitations in middle life he "became positive in his opposition to it"; and it does not greatly avail to point further to "the tenacity with which the Cambridge mathematicians adhered to the Cartesian system long after the publication of Newton's discoveries;.....the slowness of their reception on the continent of Europe, and the obstinate resistance offered by Leibnitz to the Newtonian doctrine of gravitation."[1] Bacon, be it repeated, was expressly claiming to make the path straight; and such a claim is still involved in the normal Baconian panegyric. His positive resistance to new truth, then, must tell specially against him; and if it be true, as Dr. Fowler claims,[2] that he had a wide influence on succeeding thinkers, there is a fair presumption that his anti-Copernicanism delayed the general acceptance of the truth.

X.

We are on more propitious ground when we come to the *pros* as regards Bacon's scientific speculation; for he was not always infelicitous in his hypotheses. Dr. Fowler rightly, I think, credits him with original insight in point of his suggestions that formal and physical astronomy should be brought into correlation,[3] and that terrestrial phenomena may help us to comprehend celestial.[4] If it be too much to say in the latter case that "this passage might almost be regarded as a prediction not only of the discoveries of Newton, but of the mode in which he made them,"[5] it is at

[1] Introd. cited, pp. 35–36.
[2] *Id.* § 14.
[3] *Descriptio Globi Intellectualis*, ch. v.
[4] *De Augmentis*, iii, 4.
[5] Introd. cited, p. 38.

least true that at both points Bacon beckons science along the path to be followed by Newton, Kant, and Laplace. It is further true that (apparently here taking a hint from Gilbert) he remarkably anticipated Newton's law of Attraction ;[1] and that he appears to have reached for himself the true idea that we see the starry sky not as it actually is at the moment of our perception, but as it was some time before, the light requiring time to travel.[2] Yet again, he came near the Newtonian conception of the nature of colour ;[3] he anticipated by nearly fifty years the famous Florentine experiment to test the compressibility of water, using lead instead of silver ;[4] and he seems to have drawn the true inference, however inexactly. Nay, he had even a glimpse of the fallacy of the doctrine of fixity of species ;[5] and his famous guess that Heat is a mode of Motion,[6] though perhaps reached haphazard,[7] at least cannot be pretended to disprove his speculative power.

Still, it is not on those grounds that Bacon can be shown to have been a forwarding force in discovery. The great guess about heat is elbowed by the errors we have noted, and no man who in Bacon's day recognised the latter could well be directly enlightened by the former. Mr. Ellis, while giving Bacon full credit for reaching the true theory of heat and realising the proper mode of proof, avows concerning the entire investigation that, " If it were affirmed that Bacon, after having had a glimpse of the truth

[1] *Novum Organum,* ii, 36 (3). Cp. the *Descriptio Globi Intellectualis,* ch. vii.
[2] *Id.* ii, 46. [3] *Id.* ii, 21.
[4] *Id.* ii, 45 ; *Hist. Densi et Rari,* near end. Cp. Ellis's note to *Nov. Org.* as cited.
[5] *Nov. Org.* i, 66. [6] *Id.* ii, 20.
[7] Cp. Whewell, *Philosophy of Discovery,* 1860, pp. 136–7.

suggested by some obvious phenomena, had then recourse, as he himself expresses it, to certain *differentiæ inanes* in order to save the phenomena, I think it would be hard to dispute the truth of the censure";[1] and Whewell, also writing after the laws of heat were established, declares that Bacon's formula "includes no laws of phenomena, explains no process, and is indeed itself an example of illicit generalisation."[2] In any case, Bacon did not help to make the truth clear. Even the true conception of the lapse of time in the transmission of light to us from the stars undergoes abortion, since "unfortunately Bacon proceeds to explain away his conjecture by arguments almost as perverse as the thought itself is felicitous."[3]

It remains to consider, in this regard, the notable plea of Mr. Spedding that Bacon's service has been estimated with a general disregard of his real precept to his fellows, and their failure to obey it. What science has really done, Mr. Spedding argues, is merely to follow Galileo, not to follow Bacon; and Bacon's counsel is still to be taken. If, he goes on—

> If Bacon were to re-appear among us at the next meeting of the great British Association, or say, rather, if he had appeared there two or three years ago (for there seems to be something great and new going on now), I think he would have shaken his head. I think he would have said: "Here has been a great deal of very good diligence used by several persons; but it has not been used upon a well-laid plan..... You have been acting all the time like a being who should attempt to conquer a country by encouraging private adventurers to make incursions each on his own account, without

[1] Note to *Novum Organum*, ii, 18.

[2] *Philosophy of Discovery*, 1860, p. 137. The Bohn editor, Mr. Joseph Devey, transcribes from Whewell almost verbatim a whole paragraph ending with these words, and signs it "Ed." (Note to *Novum Organum*, ii, 20, p. 481.) Whewell's *Philosophy of Discovery* was first published early in 1856, the Bohn Bacon a little later.

[3] Fowler, as cited, p. 40.

any system of combined movements to subdue and take possession. I see that wherever you have the proper materials.....your work is excellent; so was Gilbert's in my time, so was Galileo's; nay, even Kepler (though his method was unskilful.....)—because he had a copious collection of materials ready to his hand, and enormous perseverance, however perversely applied, and a religious veracity—did at least hit upon one of the greatest discoveries ever made by one man. But what could Kepler have done without Tycho Brahé's tables of observation? And what might not Galileo have done if he had had a large enough collection of facts? This therefore it is that disappoints me. I do not see any sufficient collection made of materials—that is, of facts in nature—or any effectual plan on foot for making one. You are scarcely better off in this respect than I was; you have each to gather the materials upon which you have to work. .....Your scholar has his dictionary provided to his hand; but your natural philosopher has still to make his dictionary for himself.

"And I wonder the more at this because this is the very thing of all others which I myself pointed out as absolutely necessary to be supplied.....You call me the Father of your Philosophy, meaning it for the greatest compliment you can pay. I thank you for the compliment, but I must decline the implied responsibility. I assure you this is none of mine." [1]

And so forth. I fear we must here pronounce the wise Spedding to have for once miscarried, somewhat in the manner of his master. His facts are wrong, and his theory is wrong. Enormous collections of facts *had* been made before he wrote, in zoology, in botany, in geology, in palæontology, by such great observers and systematisers as Linné, Buffon, Cuvier; and still it needed the successive *ideas* of Goethe, Lamarck, Oken, St. Hilaire, Von Baer, Darwin, to cause the mass to take orderly shape in a luminous

[1] *Evenings with a Reviewer*, 301–2. Also pref. to the *Parasceve* in vol. i of the *Works*, p. 382.

generalisation. As Whewell replied to Spedding, "he is urging upon men of science to do what they have always done";[1] and, further, he failed to realise that men need ideas to enable them even to *see* a great many of the facts. At times, perhaps, every discoverer, every theorist who is loyal to inductive tests, becomes conscious of having advanced at random, of having reached his true hypotheses by hazard, of having been slow to deal in an orderly way with his material. But this is part of the proof that, as aforesaid, it is vain to hope to colligate facts usefully to any great extent without a guiding idea.[2] Every searcher does collect facts, and make use of the collections of others; but a principle of correlation, when found, is itself a fact; and though much knowledge of details is usually the condition precedent of the discovery, mere accumulation of these will not guarantee it.

The very assumption, indeed, that "facts" are easily known as such, and that we may gather them as we do mushrooms or strawberries, bringing only diligence and strength of back to the work, is in itself a bad misconception; and it seems to be the secret of most of Bacon's blunders. To state a phenomenon without importing any theory, any presupposition, is no such simple matter; witness the bulk of Bacon's own writing. If as a test we take the breathless catalogue of the activities of Solomon's House, in which the *New Atlantis* breaks off, we shall see that the imagined experiments are one and all controlled by prior theories, as often as not delusive,

[1] *Philosophy of Discovery*, p. 155.

[2] As Whewell asked in 1860, "Of ten thousand meteorological registers kept by ordinary observers, what good has come to science?" (work cited, p. 155). Compare Jevons, *Principles of Science*, 1-vol. ed. p. 576.

and so come under his own description of the common run of experiments as "directed by too indiscreet a zeal at some prejudged effect."[1] Thus we are told at the start that the sages have caves, some of them three miles deep, which they use "for all coagulations, indurations, refrigerations, and conservations of bodies," whereas we know that the temperature at that depth is anything but refrigerative; and in the next breath we hear that the towers, "the highest about half a mile in height," some of them built upon high mountains and so yielding a total height of three miles, are also used "for insolation, refrigeration, conservation." Again, after an account of varieties of experiments in grafting and in forcing plants, and of poisonings, dissections, and dwarfings, such as had often been tried before Bacon's day without much profit in scientific inference, we are told of a series of *a priori* preparations of foods, and we read :—

> Above all, we strive to have drinks of extreme thin parts, to insinuate into the body, and yet without all biting, sharpness, or fretting; insomuch as some of them put upon the back of your hand will, with a little stay, pass through the palm, and yet taste mild to the mouth.

Here we have the very spirit of forejudgment in unbridled play; and we can guess how Bacon's ideal college of research would have gone to work under him, with its staff of "merchants of light," "depredators," "mystery men," "pioneers," "dowry men," "lamps," "inoculators," and all the rest of them. They would have spent their strength in putting queer questions and collecting bogus facts, multiplying illusory data and worse generalisations, doing anything but think out the great problems under their eyes and test out their empirical solutions.

[1] Preface to the *Instauratio.*

In short, Bacon, with all his large self-confidence, could not have posed quite so magisterially at a British Association meeting as Spedding would have had him do. With his quick sense of a parliamentary situation, he might rather have turned to his prompter and asked: "Nay, if you make out that they have gained nothing from me, what becomes of my repute? and how argue in one breath that they still suffer chiefly for lack of collections, and that even Kepler in my day *had* 'a copious collection of materials ready to his hand,' and none the less went to work as bunglingly as you say? Are you not hoist with your own petard? And how, tell me, have I come to have my fame if the one original or truly Baconian counsel I gave be the one they never took?"

XI.

Let us try, going more cautiously to work than Spedding did, to answer that question for ourselves. Let us not ask, with Spedding's interlocutor in his dialogue, "What after all was it that Bacon did for philosophy?" but rather "What is it in Bacon that has won him his intellectual status?" Macaulay's forensic eulogy will not avail to accredit that status, any more than his libel now avails to disgrace the thinker as a man. Every claim made for Bacon as an innovator in scientific logic must be discounted. Not only did great men of his own day, as Kepler and Galileo, do things even as he said they ought to be done, before he offered his counsel, but long before him what was practicable in his advice had been given by others. He was assuredly not the first, by many generations, to insist on the resort to nature, to observation, verification, experiment.[1] John of Salisbury

[1] See Fowler, as cited, §§ 12, 13.

and Richard of St. Victor in the twelfth century, Roger Bacon in the thirteenth, had denounced the blind idolatry of authorities; a score of later humanists had challenged the infallibility of Aristotle; Aristotle himself had given wise precepts that should have enlightened his devotees; and if we are to give the palm to any man of the scientific Renaissance for the absolutely right enunciation of the laws of scientific research, it must be to Leonardo da Vinci, who, in a writing that remained for three hundred years in manuscript, has said: "Theory is the general: Experiments are the soldiers,"[1] and abundantly made clear that he lived his doctrine.

Shall we then say with Whewell, who recognises all this, that "if Bacon was not the first to tell men that they must collect their knowledge from observation, he had no rival in his peculiar office of teaching them *how* science must thus be gathered from experience"?[2] Here we are nearer the truth; but Whewell again puts us in some perplexity when, after insisting that Bacon's great precept was "a graduated and successive induction," and that this view "was not only new, but.....has never been adequately illustrated up to the present day,"[3] he goes on to say that "His sagacity had taught him that the progress of science must be gradual; but it had not led him to judge adequately how gradual it must be, nor of what different kinds of inquiries, taken in due order, it must consist, in order to obtain success."[4] If he thus miscarried as to the mode and speed of advance, wherein does he aid men to know the *how?* The position is still untenable. And Mr.

[1] See the passages cited by Whewell, pp. 106–7; by Fowler, p. 91; and by Hallam, *Introd. to the Literature of Europe*, ed. 1872, i, 222–5.

[2] Work cited, p. 130. [3] *Id.* pp. 130–1. [4] *Id.* p. 137.

Spedding, as we saw, admits that the *Organum* "appears to have been a mistake," though we have seen him in effect assuming to support Bacon's own claim that by abundant collation of facts special "acuteness and strength of genius" could be dispensed with.[1] We seem driven back to the simpler ground taken up by Mr. Ellis: "It is neither to the technical part of his method, nor to the details of his view of the nature and progress of science, that his great fame is justly owing. His merits are of another kind. They belong rather to the spirit than to the positive precepts of his philosophy."

But can we come at nothing more specific than this? Is it an adequate explanation of a vast literary renown to say that it comes of the "spirit" of the man under notice? Are not all great and long-lasting reputations, where they rest on books, due in greater or less degree to some quality in the writer's utterance, whether a grace or richness of speech or an intensity of tone that reveals a personality as well as a doctrine?

Surely it is so, and surely this is a main part of the explanation of Bacon's fame, as of that of Descartes. None of Bacon's eulogists, I think, has ventured to lay as much stress on his literary as on his other gifts; and yet they are the most salient of all, if by literary effect we understand not merely the outcome of vocabulary and rhythm and imagery, but the prevailing vibration and pressure of mind as well as the effect wrought by an architectonic whole, the entire exposition or structural correlation of parts, alike as to purport and as to form. For who in the literature of prose sets up a more unfailing sensation

[1] *Novum Organum*, i, 61.

of intellectual vitality and power than does Bacon, even after we have grown distrustful of his science and dubious of his profitableness? M. Rémusat has testified to it, calling it the specific impression of "greatness." But again I urge that the impression is built up by genius for utterance. And if there is anything which Bacon ostensibly ought to have had in terms of his heredity, it was just that gift. His father was famed for his shrewdness and pungency in speech; and his mother was so good a linguist and stylist that her translation of Jewel's *Apologia* was held worthy of its original. Nay, we have his own mature and deliberate judgment that he was "a man naturally fitted rather for literature than for anything else, and borne by some destiny against the inclination of his genius into the business of active life."[1] To the justice of that verdict his whole work testifies. It was not that he was a bad lawyer or a poor politician: he was neither; it was that the literary gift is his master faculty, overbalancing every other. If there is one characteristic that holds of the whole various mass of Bacon's writing, it is the constant cogency and pregnancy of the style, in every order of composition. He never framed a weak sentence; and his undeviating felicity of expression is never once marred by effort at emphasis. Even in translation from his Latin he has so inspired his better renderers that their versions can be read with much of the large enjoyment set up by his English; but early in Shaw's rendering of the *De Augmentis*, of which the vocabulary is often finely Elizabethan and the cadence no less so (albeit the translation takes unpardonable liberties in the way of omission and

[1] *De Augmentis*, B. viii, c. 3, *ad init.* (Routledge's ed. p. 606). Spedding's translation.

condensation), we have such tautologies as "barren sterility" and "easy facility."[1] Of such lapses Bacon was incapable. Too rich in phrase to need to strive for show, he mints his meaning with the security of perfect power.

Not that he can have attained that consummate hold of language without endless exercise. Probably much of the success of his crowning works is due to the fact that they represent something like the tenth casting of his thesis. We find him saying in effect the same things, with many of the same phrases, in a whole series of drafts—the *Interpretation of Nature,* the English *Advancement of Learning,* the English *Filum Labyrinthi* (the *Cogitata et Visa*), the *Valerius Terminus,* the *Descriptio Globi Intellectualis,* all merging first in the *De Augmentis* and again in the *Novum Organum,* as successive presentments of the *Instauratio Magna.* It is his chaplain, Dr. Rawley, who writes:—

> I myself have seen at the least twelve copies of the *Instauration,* revised year by year one after another, and every year altered and amended in the frame thereof, till at last it came to that model in which it was committed to the press.[2]

The maximum of effectiveness is thus finally reached by Bacon somewhat as it was by Hobbes when he distilled anew all his most mastering and possessing thoughts in the *Leviathan.* Only when he is doing task-work with no outlook on the universal, as in the *History of Henry VII,* does

[1] Bohn ed. pp. 3, 27. Perhaps Bacon for once came near a tautology when he wrote "knowledge and learning" in the fine passage in the fifth paragraph from the end of B. i of the *Advancement of Learning;* but in turning this into the Latin of the *De Augmentis* he wrote *doctrinam et scientiam,* which permits of the improved reading "instruction [=teaching] and knowledge."

[2] *Life of Bacon,* prefixed to the *Resuscitatio.* Works, ed. Ellis and Spedding, i. 11.

Bacon's style grow grey; and even then it is never flaccid. It is to be seen aright, however, only in his greater works, which have all the concision of the essays with a larger movement and a richer glow. He has brooded over his intellectual aspirations and indictments till he is charged with concentrated argument, and his thought yields imagery as an electric battery gives sparks. Precisely because he did not fully know the best that had been and was being done, he overflows in reprobation of the futilities of average method, and kindles continuously to a living idea of the better way. It is finally his genius, his sense of intellectual power, that makes him fail to reck his own rede: he has so long been full of his vivid consciousness of seeing the true way in abstract that he cannot surmise how much of patient drudgery should have checked and counteracted his masterful guesses at concrete truth.

XII.

That is, in a word, the essential difference between him and the true man of science. Darwin, with his supreme candour, has avowed that he made hundreds of absurd experiments to test absurd hypotheses: what are left of his ideas are, so to speak, the survivals of a multitude of speculative "variations" after due testing, or what testing he could give them. Bacon, with his intensely active mind, had also his multitudes of guesses, and gave many of them the franchise of his books on far too easy terms: he is finally rather a literary artist than a scientific investigator, though the curiosity of the true investigator was so full-grown in him that, could he only have had his whole mind free to follow up his game, and further have had the wholesome friction of free criticism

from his scientific peers, he might have grown nearly as strong in the concrete as in the abstract. Dr. Rawley claimed for him that "he contemned no man's observations, but would light his torch at every man's candle," yet reveals this:—

> His opinions and assertions were for the most part binding, and not contradicted by any; rather like oracles than discourses; which may be imputed either to the well weighing of his sentence by the skales of truth and reason, or else to the reverence and estimation wherein he was commonly held, that no man would contest it with him; so that there was no argumentation or *pro* and *con.* (as they term it) at his table, or, if there chanced to be any, it was argued with much submission and moderation.[1]

After all, this naïve testimony is but another proof of Bacon's genius for concentrated speech. Who would debate with that master of thirty legions? Only men of science bent on the *facta non verba* of the famous motto. The fact remains, after every analysis, that in his own day as in ours Bacon made the specific impression of genius, of abnormal intellectual authority, which for most people defies all reduction by criticism, and from many secures something like worship. Of all the men of Bacon's day, perhaps the most typically literary, in the sense of entire receptiveness to all aspects of literary art, was Ben Jonson; and we know how unaffectedly he brushed aside all questions of official disgrace in his absolute response to the impact upon him of Bacon's genius for speech, oral and written.

So that the great Chancellor lives for us finally not so much as a thinker, or a pioneer of science, or a politician, or an experimenter, though he was all of these, and in politics in particular the most sagacious

[1] *Life,* as cited, p. 12.

and skilful parliamentarian of his age; but rather as a man of genius, notable in every one of these fields by force of his supreme faculty for thought-composition and utterance, and his unwearying activity of brain. Not less than in regard to Shakespeare's self—that profoundly different temperament, in whom the gift of speech was lyric, impassioned, creative, rhythmic, poetic, instead of judicial, deliberate, critical, analytic, didactic—one would fain figure him as he looked in the flesh. As it happens, "deep-browed Verulam" is always limned for us (save in the effigy of his head as a child) with his hat drawn close down on the said brow; and the finely fanciful medallion engraved for Martin's *Character of Lord Bacon* (1835) is clearly wrong, inasmuch as it makes the head short, whereas from the portrait-bust we know that of the child to have been very long, taking after his mother's. And as his mother was a woman of manifold intellectual activities, discursive, hortatory, meddlesome, rather than balanced and prudent like his father, we may broadly say of him that he was her child, for good and for harm. Like her, he was not much developed on the side of the affections; like her, he was the discursive intelligence incarnate.

We must just content ourselves to realise him as best we may in terms of Harvey's curious likening of his eyes to "the bright, beautiful eye of a viper." It was not at all said in malice: Harvey spoke as a scientific observer, who saw the luminous amber-like beauty of the viper's eye without making any moral detractions from it. No keener eye, in sooth, looked on men and their ways in the apocryphally "spacious times of great Elizabeth" and of her parvanimous successor. Frail as a man in authority, to the point

of incurring public ruin, he is finally for us so much of a sheer intelligence that we hardly think of him as an affectional personality. We conceive of him rather as a mind tied to office; and pay little heed even to the sudden sombre note of censure and repudiation of his wife, which constitutes the sad codicil to his will. This was verily not Shakespeare!

If it were not for the intellectual imperfections already noted, and his too recurrent flattery of the pseudo-Solomon he was doomed to serve, and the too adroit accommodations to orthodox opinion in what ought to have been his most purely scientific works, our sense of Bacon's intellectual wealth would fall nothing short of the conception of philosophic greatness; and to that verdict we are constantly being swayed by his magistral ways. Truth and error come from him with the same voice and mien of calm authority. In the very paragraph in which, committing the sin he is always censuring, he takes for granted the old dogma that nature is to be divided into the orders of the free, the *erring*, and the constrained *(prima libertatem naturæ tractat; secunda errores; tertia vincula)*, he suddenly illumines the blind alley he is treading with the clear thought that "man has no power over nature in anything but motion, whereby he either puts bodies together or separates them." John Mill claimed for his father the first recognition of "this essential and primary law of man's power over nature" as "a fundamental principle of Political Economy."[1] In point of fact it had been earlier dwelt upon as such by Verri,[2] and

[1] *Principles of Political Economy*, B. I, ch. i, § 2, *note*, citing James Mill's *Elements*, ch. i.

[2] Cited by McCulloch, *Principles of Political Economy*, 2nd ed. Introd. p. 56; and after him by Marx, *Das Kapital*, Kap. i, § 2.

by Destutt de Tracy ;[1] and though Verri probably got the thought from Bacon, and Destutt de Tracy certainly did,[2] its origination is in all these citations passed unnoticed, as it is in a later attribution of the idea, by a well-read student,[3] to Professor Marshall. Perhaps Bacon in turn borrowed it ;[4] but at all events it is he who has put it in modern currency. And it is in these kindling contacts of his mind with that of the successive generations of posterity that we find the secret of his enduring renown.

Men read him and note his errors, his inadequacies ; but even while they detail the errors they are electrified by the penetrating truths, which are worded with the essential force of great oracles. No matter how he may divagate from the true faith in his practice and his elaboration of rules for that, he has seen the way in his inward eye as clearly as ever man did, and defined the wrong paths with the very perfection of critical vision. Others knew better wherein consisted the art of finding new concrete knowledge ; but none

[1] *Traité d'Économie Politique,* p. 82 (= *Elémens d'Idéologie*, 4e et 5e Pties, 2e. édit. 1818, p. 147), also cited by McCulloch, in note to ch. i, Pt. i.

[2] There is a complete *Sommaire de Bacon* in the *Appendice* to the *Logique* = 3e Ptie of the *Elémens d'Idéologie ;* and in the *Discours Préliminaire* Bacon's division of learning in the *De Augmentis* into History, Poetry, and Philosophy is criticised as radically bad. Destutt constantly appreciates the suggestiveness of Bacon while specifying his shortcomings.

[3] *The Co-operative Movement in Great Britain,* by Beatrice Potter, 1891, citing Professor Marshall's *Principles of Economics,* B. ii, ch. 2.

[4] It does not occur in the precise form under notice in his English *Advancement of Learning,* appearing only in the *Descriptio Globi Intellectualis* (ch. 2) and the *De Augmentis,* B. ii, ch. 2, and thus seems to be his own late-found idea, unless indeed he found it in Shakespeare. See the *Winter's Tale,* Act IV, sc. iii. The probability is that it reached Shakespeare from Bacon through Ben Jonson. It should be noted that in the *Novum Organum* (B. ii, Aph. 50) he speaks of man as operating upon natural bodies in seven ways "*besides* the simple bringing together and putting asunder of them" ; but the details do not affect the principle.

was more imaginatively alive than he to the nature of the forces of error, howbeit his abstract insight into them could no more save him from their snares than his exquisite worldly wisdom could guard him from social shame and downfall. Though the antitheses of Pope and Macaulay are in sooth mere extravagances that darken counsel, there is verily some strange duality in his equipment; and we can but repeat that the angel of light in him is the genius of intellectual perception and utterance, and that the miscarrying spirit emerges in the slackly seconding will, the magic of his speech concealing the sunderance.

Under the spell of that speech posterity has lain, and will remain. The measure of his innovating virtue is the welcome that was given to him by great innovators. Comenius pronounced the *Instauratio* "the most instructive philosophic work of the century."[1] Vico named Bacon as the third of his masters, the first two being Plato and Tacitus—a list to which he later added Grotius.[2] Leibnitz mentions as a happy incident of his own youth that when he had turned away from the scholastic philosophy there fell into his hands, among other writings by new thinkers, the *De Augmentis* of "that great man Francis Bacon." Destutt de Tracy, analysing him and discounting him as compared with Descartes, ever and again breaks out in the language of tribute and admiration. From the thought of the great Bacon, he avows, "will forever be re-born all that there is of truth on the earth";[3] "the history of Bacon is really the history of the human mind: such

[1] Professor Laurie, *John Amos Comenius*, 6th ed. p. 69.

[2] Introd. to French trans. of the *Scienza Nuova*, 1844, pp. xxvi, xxxiii. Professor Flint, *Vico*, p. 33.

[3] *Logique, Disc. prélim.* p. 53, ed. 1818.

is the ascendancy of superior men";[1] later investigators have "limited themselves to following the impulsion given by Bacon.....he is become the soul of their search."[2] So too in the logic of Hobbes, whom he greatly admires, the critic finds "in every line the pupil of Bacon";[3] and, indeed, if we do but keep in view all the concrete qualifications above set forth, we may fitly say as much of the whole army of scientific seekers since. Those who have never read him have yet partaken of the large impulse he gave out; and those to whom his whole concrete science is naught are moved to new clearness of choice and purpose by his wording of their principles. So much can genius for judgment and utterance avail.

XIII.

As against these inalienable advantages, Bacon's fame incurs one notable danger among late posterity —that, namely, of being gainsaid because of his leaning to political absolutism. In an age in which the ideal of democracy stands more and more for common sense, and that of Cæsarism for the contrary, it is apt to seem a scandal to some that any claimant to the laurels of wisdom should have figured, so recently as the days of James I, on the side of the pretensions of kings *versus* the rights of men. But to disparage Bacon on that score as we might disparage one who so thought in our own day would be to make a great miscarriage of critical justice. The case must be weighed.

[1] *Id.* p. 86. [2] *Id.* p. 98.

[3] *Id.* p. 99. The proposition, however, is questionable as regards Hobbes, and Dr. Croom Robertson denies it as against Kuno Fischer and others (*Hobbes,* pp. 17–21). In the preface to his *De Corpore* (1655) Hobbes names as instaurators of true natural philosophy in modern times Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, Gassendi, Mersenne, and Harvey, but says nothing of Bacon.

To begin with, it was *impossible* that either under Elizabeth or under James the claims of parliamentarism should have been pushed as far as they were under Charles. To govern through the crown must then have been the ideal of every sane statesman. As it was, Bacon felt keenly the injustice of the disfavour meted to him for his championship of the public cause against the Queen's ministers in his early years of parliamentary life: he had urged a course that would have much better safeguarded the crown than did the ministers' own, inasmuch as it would have conjoined royal prestige with justice. But when his policy was spurned, he had simply no remedy. To force the Government to yield to parliamentary pressure in those days was a course that no individual leader could have ventured on: it was only a universally felt grievance, such as the patents of monopoly, that could evoke an opposition so general as to carry the Queen and her ministers before it.

In his dealings with the cause of James, again, Bacon was far from taking an anti-constitutional course. Again and again, through the critical period in which Salisbury was mismanaging the business of the king's debts, alternately begging and blustering for his master, Bacon urged a policy at once of dignity and conciliation, anxiously contending that the king should look always to Parliament for supplies, and never dream of supplying himself. Had his advice been taken, and had not the king been so incurably shiftless and reckless in the matter which lies at the bottom of all revolutions—finance—the affairs of England would certainly not in Bacon's day have drifted as they did towards the catastrophe which befel in the next reign. And it is clear that to

the last the Commons believed in his honesty and his sagacity.[1]

It is true that he sought to preserve the king's prerogative, and complimented him on adhering to his rights. But here again it would be a bad mistake to think of him as if he were playing the part of Strafford against Pym and Fairfax. If Falkland could despair of the constitutional genius of Parliament under Charles I, Bacon could not sanely believe in it under James. He had seen too little of it to look there for the salvation of a polity already shaken by the blind passions of fanaticism. To James, on the other hand, he might well look, at the outset, with even more hope than was set up in Colet and Erasmus by the young Henry VIII, or in Melanchthon by the young Charles V; for the Scotch king on his coming to England was past youth, had borne the trial of affairs, and was incontestably a scholar and a student. Not only was it natural that Bacon should turn to such a master with an eager trust: there was no other help to turn to. His scheme for the advancement of science expressly relied upon royal help: only a king's treasury could sustain it. That he should therefore stand, albeit reluctantly and with prudence, for the king's prerogative, was practically a matter of course; and had he done otherwise after his own disgrace, while the king remained personally friendly, he would merely have cut the hopeless figure of the deposed official turned malcontent and demagogue. What cannot be denied is that, besides habitually panegyrising the King, he warmly applauded him for his bigoted and malicious crusade against the heretical Dutch Professor Vorstius,[2] and he seems to

[1] Spedding, *Evenings*, ii, 397; *Works*, v, 551.

[2] *Letters and Life*, iv, 313, *note* 2; v, 142. Cp. S. H. Reynolds,

have facilitated, in his official capacity, the burning of the antitrinitarian heretics Wightman and Legate, when Coke raised legal objections.[1] Concerning this evil episode, on which Spedding is silent, it can but be said that all the bishops applauded the executions, and that all England looked on impassively.[2] The day of toleration had not yet dawned. But it is a sad reflection that Bacon tacitly consented to the death of the last two men slain for heresy in England.

If, finally, Bacon is to be thrust down in historic status for lacking the democratic instinct in such an environment as his, some other distinguished figures must share in his degradation. Luther, who capitulated body and soul to feudalism, not only renouncing the peasants who rebelled against a crushing tyranny, but acclaiming the divine right of all princes to absolute rule — Luther must be discrowned first. Shakespeare himself, it is to be feared, must be challenged; and if he be let pass for a lack of evidence, there are others who cannot be. To say nothing of the profound Hume, so easily Bacon's master in metaphysic, and the wise Turgot, so much after Bacon's own heart as a statesman, we shall have to unlaurel the great Goethe, who, when far in the rear of the French Revolution, met the revival of democratic hope around him with a stiff hostility. He "was no friend of freedom of the press, nor of constitutional popular rights, which seemed to him to be hindrances to vigorous government."[3] This in 1816. In the same group, needless to say, will stand one of Bacon's modern disparagers, Carlyle, who

Introd. to Clar. Press ed. of *Essays*, p. xxxii; and Gardiner, *History*, as cited, ii, 128.

[1] Gardiner, ii, 129.

[2] *Id.* p. 130.

[3] Düntzer, *Life of Goethe*, Eng. trans. ii, 331.

stood for Cæsarism in the full light and stir of the nineteenth century, doing nothing to help democracy, in which he had no faith. If the cancelment of literary diplomas be thus carried on all round with courage and consistency, Bacon's will perhaps go with the rest, despite his three hundred years' distance and his real service to the constitutional principle as he found it at work. But till the assize goes thus methodically to work, his case must stand over.

If, indeed, we are concerned to press against the forlorn Chancellor a really serious and unanswerable charge, it lies only too ready to our hands. It is not the charge of treason to the cause of the people, still less the charge of treason to Essex. The valid indictment against him is that where the nation was but half moralised he was no more so; and that where the king was relatively enlightened he was still benighted. His *Advertisement touching a Holy War* and his *Considerations touching a War with Spain,* with the still worse doctrine set forth in the eighth book of the *De Augmentis,* furnish the proof that with all his discursive intelligence and normal sense of honour he had no ethical depth, no moral originality. "I will never set politics against ethics," he writes, in the very act of doing so. Avowing that an "aggressive war" to avert civil strife is a bad and dangerous expedient, he urges, without a grain of real proof, that "this kingdom hath cause of just fear of overthrow from Spain."[1] And in the *De Augmentis* he propounds an ethic in which even pretexts for war are dispensed with, after being declared necessary. After a hundred vauntings of the superiority of Christian righteousness to pagan virtue, he puts forth with perfect deliberation the gospel of perpetual war for

[1] *Considerations,* as cited, in *Letters and Life,* vii, 478.

war's sake. "But above all," he tells us, in his chapter on "The Art of Empire or Civil Government,"[1] "for empire and greatness, it is of most importance that a nation profess arms as their principal honour, study, and occupation. For the things which we have formerly spoken of are but qualifications for the use of arms; and what is qualification without intention and act?.....No nation which does not directly profess arms and devote themselves to the practice thereof, may look to have any special greatness fall into their mouths." Such is the fine flower of Christian philosophy. Aristotle, two thousand years before—Aristotle, whom Bacon so often and so self-sufficiently disparages—had confuted the whole lamentable thesis in a few sentences :—

> Facts, as well as arguments, prove that the legislator should direct all his military and other measures to the provision of leisure and the establishment of peace. For most of these military states are safe only while they are at war, but fall when they have acquired their empire : like unused iron they rust in time of peace. And for this the legislator is to blame, he never having taught them how to lead the life of peace.[2]

And Bacon's own historic summary, showing the invariable decadence of the militarist State, gives the proof *a posteriori,* though he could not read his own testimony.

We can but say, once more, that we are here listening to a great man of letters, not to a great thinker, a great statesman, or a true sociologist.[3] The unregal

[1] *De Augmentis,* B. viii, ch. 3. Routledge's ed. pp. 610–11.

[2] Aristotle, *Politics,* vii, 14, *end* (15). Jowett's translation.

[3] It must be added that Bacon, though often sagacious in his notions of social science, held, like other men of his day, by the bullion delusion. (*Letters and Life,* vi, 22 : Advice to Villiers. Cp. vi, 374.) In the same document, however, Bacon writes : "For matter of Trade, I confess it is out of my profession."

king, with his plans for a European peace, had here gone further in human wisdom than his Chancellor, whose ethic is but that of an average English gentleman of his day—in other words, of a Euphuised barbarian. Indeed, Burghley was here incomparably his superior; and we are almost set wondering whether his sagacities on the more domestic problems of politics may not at times be but echoes of family discourse. On this issue, be it noted, Spedding is content to argue that if Bacon's advice had been taken as to a combined crusade of England and Spain against Turkey, or of Holland and England against Spain (Bacon was ready, nay, eager, for either!), the gain would have been great: in the former case through the co-operation of Protestant and Catholic, in the latter through the check to the advance of Catholicism. The arguments are in fact mutually exclusive, for if the latter is to stand the former must fall; and both take for granted, with a quite startling simplicity, not only that the act of war as such means no moral or political harm, but that either war could be carried through without any prolonged strain. And yet Spedding had before him, what Bacon had not, the long ruin of the Thirty Years' War, which threw back German civilisation for a hundred years. He even argues that the combination against Spain (which, be it observed, would have been made impossible by the proposed coalition for a Holy War) might have put a stop to the Thirty Years' War—as if the spirit which wrought that in Germany could not have wrought another elsewhere. Such are the lapses of the wise, when they are content to assimilate to the political ethic of the average man.

When Spedding could thus conform to that ethic in the nineteenth century, however, it would seem an

unjust disregard of the comparative principle to press our censure against Bacon for holding by it in the seventeenth. We can but say that here, of a surety, he was no instaurator; and that his inability to apply to national relations a single one of the precepts he professed to revere in the individual relation—his commonplace incapacity to think critically on war, where his prosaic old uncle and his vain master had actually done so—will be apt to discount sadly for posterity his unwavering confidence in his own moral superiority. And those of us who yet feel for him some of the sympathetic regard with which he filled Spedding, are glad, on the other side, to be able to recall that from first to last he at least saw that the greatness of nations lay in *life*, in the well-being of all their members; and that towards Ireland, the *corpus vile* of so many English experiments in savagery, he always counselled conciliation, magnanimity, and patience. For the cure of his own country he never prescribed the method of murder, here improving on many of his fellow Protestants, though he held with them in their attitude to other races.

XIV.

As regards, finally, his direct influence on men in their relation to religion, we have to note the same singular validity and efficacy of his critical as against his conventional sayings, and as against his unhappy conformity to the persecuting proclivities of King James. 'A hundred times he stultifies his own precepts of unbridled research by his commonplace resort to Scriptural tests and sanctions, reducing science in the trite old fashion to a commentary on the sacred books. But we feel that these

ineptitudes were partly bids for favour from a priesthood which he knew could but too easily preach down his whole life's work; and all the while he has kept in his text the impeachment of that priesthood's past sins. Men may cite from him platitudes about faith and revelation, God and Scripture,[1] and fatuities about evil spirits,[2] meant for the devil-dreading eye of James; but those are as chaff before the wind of such sayings as these :—

> The commandment of knowledge is yet higher than the commandment over the will; for it is a commandment over the reason, belief, and understanding of men, which is the highest part of the mind, and giveth law to the will itself; for there is no power on earth which setteth up a throne or chair of state in the spirits and souls of men but instruction and knowledge.[3]
>
> For certain it is that God worketh nothing in nature but by second causes; and if they would have it otherwise believed, it is mere imposture, as it were, in favour of God.[4]
>
> As for the narrations touching the prodigies and miracles of religions, they are either not true or not natural, and therefore impertinent for the story of nature.[5]
>
> [Doctrines of design] are properly alleged in metaphysics; but in physics are impertinent, and as remoras to the ship, that hinder the sciences from holding on their course of improvement, and introducing a neglect of searching after physical causes.[6]
>
> Men make themselves, as it were, the mirror and rule of nature. It is incredible what a number of idols have been

[1] *E.g.* "So ethics ought to be entirely subservient to theology, and obedient to the precepts thereof" (*De Augmentis,* B. vii, ch. 3).

[2] *De Augmentis,* B. iii, ch. 2.

[3] *Advancement of Learning*, B. i, near end. See above, p. 98, *note. Doctrina*, the term substituted for "learning" in the *De Augmentis,* has often the meaning of learning, but it as often has its primary meaning of "teaching," "instruction," and the context shows the meaning of the clause to have been that the only power which can set up a throne in men's minds is the process of persuasion—teaching proceeding on knowledge.

[4] *Id.* par. 6. [5] *Id.* B. ii. [6] *De Augmentis,* B. iii, ch. 4.

introduced into philosophy by the reduction of natural operations to a correspondence with human actions; that is, by imagining nature acts as man does.[1]

All superstition is much the same, whether it be that of astrology, dreams, omens, retributive judgment, or the like, in all of which the deluded believers observe events which are fulfilled, but neglect and pass over their failure, though it be much more common.[2]

In short, you may find all access to any species of philosophy, however pure, intercepted by the ignorance of divines.[3]

The man who wrote thus, however he might hedge and temporise, and even lapse into ordinary religious unreason, assuredly made for freethought; even as the denouncer of the idols of the tribe and the den and the market-place, though by his constructive fantasies he might move the first inquirers of the Royal Society to trifle at large,[4] helped in the end to banish arbitrariness from scientific thought. It is thus that genius is justified of her children; and it is in the obscure tenacity of her sway that we must look for the source of the strange dream that he who wrote the *Novum Organum* wrote also *The Winter's Tale.*

[1] *Id.* B. v, ch. 4. [2] *Novum Organum,* B. i, Aph. 46.
[3] *Id.* Aph. 90. Cp. the English *Filum Labyrinthi,* cc. 6, 7.
[4] See Sprat's *History of the Royal Society* for a list of the earlier topics of inquiry.

HOBBES

I.

It has been given to few thinkers to set up more of critical and emotional hostility and less of emotional sympathy than have fallen to the share of Thomas Hobbes; and yet somehow he has never ceased to be a thoroughly interesting figure in the history of philosophy.[1] Without realising the Baconian ideal of a "dry light of truth," he sheds something that the phrase "dry light" perhaps describes better than any other; and he has had the singular fortune to attract thereby, centuries after his day, men who reject his most cherished political principles, while at the same time he has outlived the animus that once bombarded his religious views. There is reason to think that a part of the explanation lies rather in the lucid strength of his style than in his matter, notable as that is.[2] And yet there is something in his personality, in the impact of his tough and tenacious argumentation, his unyielding yet unembittered pugnacity, that steadfastly charms the intellect, howbeit without capturing the feelings.

I suppose no moral philosopher gives less notion of moral feeling than he. Aristotle, who on the whole is so unimpassioned an analyst that it is hard to

[1] Cp. Mackintosh, *On the Progress of Ethical Philosophy*, ed. Whewell, 1872, p. 59; Hallam, *Literature of Europe*, 11th ed. iii, 99 sq.

[2] Cp. Mackintosh, as cited, p. 58; Lewes, *History of Philosophy*, 4th ed. ii, 229. Lewes, it must be said, makes a very slight study of Hobbes, doing little beyond using the extracts of Hallam.

understand how anybody can either love or hate him, yet has passing pulses of Hellenic aspiration that open up long vistas of emotional life. Spinoza's rigid framework of demonstration vibrates ever and again with the deepest feeling that philosophy can contain. Berkeley is chronically splenetic; Plato often aglow with poetic passion; and Kant with a certain solemn fervour; even the placid Hume has a contagious smile; but Hobbes can be even crustily censorious without making us feel he is heated.[1] One thinks of him always as a rubicund old gentleman of stately forehead, with a rasp in his voice and a clear gleam in his eye; neither greatly hating his enemies nor warmly loving his friends, but capable of debating crisply with either in a fashion constantly stimulating; and loving his argument as he loved nothing else. And so one prefers the portrait which shows him in his hale old age to that reproduced in Professor Croom Robertson's monograph, which presents a rather spruce and handsome cavalier of forty. He is the prince of old bachelors. In his written life no woman's name enters after his mother's save that of his patroness, the Countess of Devonshire, wife and mother of his patrons. The episode of his illegitimate child is but a hint in the background.

It is customary to think of him as typically English, mainly because of his name, which has as Saxon a ring as those of Bacon and Locke. Yet the three men are as profoundly different as men of different

[1] Mackintosh's remark, that in his old age he became "the most imperious and morose of dogmatists," is misleading. It can apply only to his unlucky wrangle with Wallis on mathematics. Charles II privately avowed to Sorbière that Hobbes was "dogmatical," but the term applied to the form of his doctrine rather than to his temper. Hobbes is dogmatical in the sense that Aristotle is, to say nothing of the theologians.

races could well be; and it is notable that Hobbes in no way realised the accepted ethnic ideal on the physical side. His hair was so black in his childhood that at school he was called "the Crow." In those days they doubtless explained the phenomenon by the memorable fact that he was prematurely born through his mother's fright at the news of the coming Spanish Armada, in 1588. He said long afterwards, in his Latin verses on his life,[1] that she bore twins, himself and Fear; an expression which seems mainly responsible for the notion that he was morbidly timorous; but which he meant to point simply to the fact that he recoiled from anarchy and broils, and never dreamt of going to the wars as did the young Descartes. In the battle of ideas, certainly, he never seriously truckled. He even had the defect—said to be English on the physical side, but fairly common even in that aspect, and certainly quite cosmopolitan on the intellectual side—of not knowing when he was beaten.

As to his family, we have some dubious details from his gossiping admirer John Aubrey, whose gift for vacuous babble is a standing warning against belief in his stories. Hobbes the elder is described as one of the ignorant Elizabethan vicars, and as having to fly from his parish of Westport (now part of Malmesbury) on account of a brawl, dying in obscurity elsewhere. The case is quite dark; but the three children, two boys and a girl, were brought up by the father's brother, a well-to-do glover and alderman of Malmesbury, who gave Thomas in particular a good classic schooling. One of his teachers, a young man fresh from college, took such pains with him and others

[1] *Vita carmine expressa*, l. 26.

that before he was fourteen Thomas was able to translate the *Medea* of Euripides into Latin verse. At fifteen he was sent by his good uncle to Magdalen College, Oxford; he studied there when Shakespeare was writing or re-writing *Othello* and *Macbeth;* and he is one of the long roll of distinguished men who have testified how little the university did for them. Oddly enough, the Oxford of that day, so far from having earned its later character for devotion to "lost causes," was a kind of "hotbed for sedition," still retaining the anti-monarchic bias originally given to universities in general by the Papacy, which instituted them, and looked to them to help it against the secular power. General looseness of control thus gave a comparatively free head on the one hand to the new Puritan sectaries, and on the other to riot; and Hobbes in his old age spoke of the university as a place where lads, whose multitude already numbered over two thousand, were "debauched to drunkenness, wantonness, gaming, and other vices." Somewhat to his chagrin, he had to admit that the rebellious Puritans were the first to put it in something like order.

In this atmosphere Hobbes comported himself very much as did Gibbon later. The dubious Aubrey pictures him, credibly for once, as rising early on summer mornings to snare jackdaws, and as taking "great delight to go to the bookbinders' and stationers' shops and lie gaping on maps"—surely the most innocent of college dissipations. The college teaching literally did nothing whatever for him. For the scholastic logic he speedily acquired a deep contempt, which indeed was then in the air everywhere,[1] though

[1] Cp. Professor Croom Robertson, *Hobbes*, p. 15.

he could still speak of Aristotle, a generation later, as "him whose opinions are at this day, and in these parts, of greater authority than any other human writings."[1] Of classics he had already as much as served the turn; and there was nothing else to do, for in mathematics Protestant England was disgracefully backward. Professor Croom Robertson notes that Hobbes at forty knew less mathematics than Descartes had learned at school; a fatal handicap, which left him always ill-founded and incompetent on that side, though he persistently leant to it. So he left college at twenty, after five years' residence, little better schooled than when he entered it. He was to build up his wit in the school of life, and his scholarship by an unaided return to the bases laid in his grammar-school.

For a way of life he had to take, in the Anglican fashion, to supervising a rich young aristocrat. This was the son of Lord Hardwick, later Earl of Devonshire; and with the young Cavendish the young Hobbes lived for a year or two as a companion in sky-larking and a helper in borrowing money—if we can trust Aubrey, who at this juncture becomes even more incoherent than usual. The two young men then made the grand tour together; and now it was that, in contact with the then vigorous intellectual life of France and Italy, Hobbes felt he must begin in earnest to study. Having "almost forgot his Latin," he set himself on his return to recover it and his Greek as well; and his translation of Thucydides, published in 1628, serves to show that he became a competent if not a punctilious scholar. He lived with his patron in the blessed conditions of perfect leisure,

[1] *De Corpore Politico* (1640), Pt. I, ch. iv, § 1.

entire freedom from pecuniary care, and equal freedom from preoccupation over modern literature. Apart from poetry and drama, for which he can never have cared much, there was no accessible modern literature to speak of, save in theology and scholastic philosophy, for neither of which had he any respect. His interest in the questions which engrossed Bacon was never wide. Then if ever might a student steep himself in the classics, form a Latin style, and feel he was making the best use of his time.

II.

What is most remarkable in Hobbes's development is that he produced nothing till he was forty years old, the age at which Spinoza's work was nearly done. All things considered, we are entitled to say that, had it not been for the rising of the great storm in English politics, Hobbes might be to-day a little known or forgotten personality, unless indeed his style should have served to keep him in view. It was with an eye to the tendencies of English politics under Charles I that he produced even his translation of Thucydides. But for the continued and heightening stress of ecclesiastical and political strife he would have spent his leisurely days over mistaken mathematics, to which as it was he gave so much time, and over elementary physics, on which he is apt to be very poor reading.[1] The great pity is that he was not so fully occupied with moral problems as to have had no time for the others, in which he always played the part of an uninspired dilettante.

Professor Croom Robertson, never partisan, and

[1] See the *Seven Philosophical Problems and Two Propositions of Geometry*, presented to the King in 1662, and published in 1682.

always to be heard with deference, gives him high credit,[1] on the score that he conceived his philosophy so comprehensively as to proceed in thought from the data of mass and motion upwards to human nature and political law, planning as his life's work a set of treatises, *De Corpore, De Homine, De Cive.* But it is a rash ambition for any man to think to be validly original in such utterly disparate studies as those of physics and civics, especially in the infancy of physics. Even the sociology of Mr. Spencer raises the question whether his biology did not bias and hamper it; though biology is much nearer sociology than are physics and mathematics. And as a matter of fact Hobbes not only attained nothing in physics beyond flashes of insight, but never brought the study in any fruitful connection with his handling of ethics and politics. Professor Robertson loyally admits[2] in the end, concerning Hobbes, that "the whole of his political doctrine," as far as *De Cive,* "has little appearance of having been thought out from the fundamental principles of his philosophy. Though connected in the one case with an express doctrine of human nature, and in the other referred to such a basis to be afterwards supplied, it doubtless had its main lines fixed when he was still a mere observer of men and manners, and not yet a mechanical philosopher. In other words, his political philosophy is explicable from his personal disposition, timorous and worldly, out of all sympathy with the aspirations of his time." In yet other words, his ruling gift was neither for thinking in symbols and abstractions of form and force, nor for reasoning organically from sub-human to human nature—a process which, to be

[1] *Hobbes,* p. 45.

[2] *Id.* p. 57.

useful, should have been through biology as a medium—but for seeing through the tangle of men's passions and verbalisms and moral fallacies, and for putting his case with a keen precision which in itself is a discipline to thought no less than to style. Only by his translations and his moral and political treatises could he approve himself the most powerful English thinker and writer of his day. To produce Hobbes was not the least unwitting service done to freethought by the Rebellion.

And yet it is in his own doctrinal despite that Hobbes ranks as a freethinker. His great and specific doctrine is one which puts the weightiest of theoretical fetters on all freedom; and it is one of the notable paradoxes of literary history that the most "unsettling" thinker of the seventeenth century was he who most explicitly taught that all argument bearing on religious opinions should be subject to the rigid restraint of the civil power. In his *Human Nature,* written in or before 1640, he expressly argues, with the smallest appearance of personal faith, that religion is to be under public control as to the fundamental doctrine "that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh," because the Church's interpretation is safer "for any man to trust to than his own."[1] It is true that in this very connection, as Spinoza did later, he lays it down that "all those good opinions which we admit and believe, though they proceed from hearing, and hearing from teaching, both which are natural, yet they are the work of God, for all the works of nature are his, and they are to be attributed to the Spirit of God."[2] Here we have the essence of pantheistic naturalism. The argument would logically lead to giving the Church or the

[1] *Human Nature,* c. xi, § 10. [2] *Id. ib.* § 9.

State precisely the same control over all doctrine whatsoever, which would certainly not have suited Hobbes at the stage he had then reached. But there is no question as to his authoritarian doctrine.

The explanation lies in the course of events which drove Hobbes to meddle at all with political and moral problems. It must never be forgotten that the Puritan movement in politics was not one of mere self-defence against regal and prelatic tyranny, but a strenuous attempt to impose tyranny upon others. The assertion that it stood for religious liberty is one of the stereotyped falsisms of sectarian history. Laud's Arminianism was as hateful and as deserving of punishment in the eyes of the Caroline Puritans as their ceremonial anarchism was in his. Between those forces, which in their struggle led up to civil war, Hobbes stood antipathetic to both, inasmuch as he was on the one hand a Determinist, here siding in part with the Calvinists against the Arminians, and on the other hand a hater of physical disturbance and clerical pretensions. What is true in Determinism was vitiated by the Calvinist theology and ethic, since to add God and Bible to Determinism is to undermine every rational ground for morals; and in any case Hobbes saw how monstrous it was to make a philosophic dispute a ground for civil war. But nothing short of a long agony of civil strife, ending in a gross military despotism, could reconcile Puritans to even a partial regimen of doctrinal tolerance; and Hobbes, though himself indifferent to their theological strifes save in the philosophic aspect, was relatively on the side of tolerance as well as peace and order when he strove to demonstrate that "Religion is Law," and that church doctrine must be defined by the State—that is, by the Sovereign as representing the community.

III.

The shaping of his system can best be understood by noticing the pressures under which he reached it. In the leisurely years of his thirties he had intercourse with, among other notable men, Bacon, who between 1621 and his death in 1626 was devoting himself, in disgrace and retirement, to his studies in natural philosophy. It is told that Bacon specially valued the help of Hobbes as the one of all his secretaries or helpers who could so comprehend his ideas as to note down usefully those he struck out in talk. It is, however, clear that, as Professor Croom Robertson sums up, Hobbes did not get his philosophic lead from Bacon. Bacon helped only indirectly to fix his bias to those physical and mathematical speculations in which he was so unsuccessful. A Baconian he never became, whether in the sense of a practiser of pure induction from phenomena or of an emulator of Bacon's encyclopædism. "Induction has no place in his doctrine of scientific method; and the word, when he uses it three or four times through all his work, and these, again, minor uses, has never the least echo of Bacon's meaning. For experiment in physics.....he had nothing but scorn."[1] An Englishman of his own day, scouting the judgment of the Frenchman Sorbière, who had pronounced him a studied imitator and "a very remaine of my Lord Bacon," makes a reply which to-day needs no addition. Between Bacon and Hobbes, says Sprat,

> there is no more likeness than there was between St. George and the Waggoner.....I scarce know two men in the world that have more different colours of speech than these two

[1] Croom Robertson, *Hobbes*, p. 21, note. Cp. Whewell, *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy*, ed. 1862, p. 53.

> great Wits. The Lord Bacon short, allusive, and abounding with metaphors; Mr. Hobbes round, close, sparing of similitudes, but ever extraordinary decent in them. The one's way of reas'ning proceeds on particulars and pleasant images, only suggesting new ways of experiment, without any pretence to the mathematicks. The other's bold, resolved, settled upon general conclusions, and in them, if we will believe his friend [*i.e.*, Sorbière], dogmatical.[1]

What held Hobbes was the argumentative side of thought; and the very purpose of making physics a gateway to politics showed how little he sought natural science for its own sake. And always he was at liberty to follow his bent.

Soon after the death of his beloved young patron in 1628, two years after succeeding to the earldom, Hobbes took a new post as travelling tutor to a son of Sir Gervase Clifton; and after the tour he stayed on in Paris, apparently engrossed in geometry and physics—for only at this time did he first meet with Euclid's *Elements*—till he was asked in 1631 to become the tutor of his dead patron's son. In the renewed quiet of his Devonshire life began vaguely his conception of a philosophy rising from Motion to Psychology, on the basis of his recognition that diverse motion is the necessary basis of sensation.[2] But in 1634, with his young pupil, he made the grand tour for the third time, staying on the Continent in all two and a half years, of which eight months were spent in Paris; and then it was that, in intercourse with the circle round Descartes's friend, Father Mersenne, he began to figure as something of a physicist and geometrician. This was the period of

[1] Sprat, *Observations on Monsieur de Sorbière's Voyage into England*, 1668, pp. 199–201

[2] This he seems to have regarded as an idea of his own. (Cp. Croom Robertson, *Hobbes*, pp. 33–34.) It is, however, implicit in Aristotle, *De animalium motione*, c. i.

Strafford's preponderance in English politics; and on the political side Hobbes seems to have been well content. Therefore, though *Homo* and *Civis* were to form the second and third parts of his system, the immediate interest lay for him in his ideas *De Corpore*. What then happened was that the political friction of the time kindled into the Rebellion, and he had to put aside his physics in order to frame his politics with express relation to that tremendous emergency. Meeting such men as Hyde and Falkland in his young patron's circle, he could not but give his mind to the vast living problem in which they were embroiled.

Thus it came about that the first fruits of Hobbes's philosophy were the short treatises *Human Nature* and *De Corpore Politico*, written and circulated about 1640, though not published till 1650, and followed up in 1642 by the *De Cive*, the first printed of all. He had seen very clearly what the ecclesiastical wrangle was coming to; and in 1640, on the assembling of the Long Parliament, he departed to Paris, "the first of all that fled." Not till 1651 did he return. It was thus in France, looking from afar on the long welter of the English war and "settlement," that he produced the *De Cive* and the *Leviathan*. The first was framed to liberate his mind fully of the political problem, so that he might return to his physics; the second and greater treatise was drawn from him by the prolongation of the war and its consummation in the killing of the king. His achievement of greatness was forced upon him by the very social tempest that he so detested.

IV.

What made *Leviathan* a masterpiece was above all

the circumstance that it is the quintessence of his thought on its themes. Compared with the *De Cive,* and still more when compared with the *Human Nature* and *De Corpore Politico,* the gist of all which it embodies, it is a trebly refined ore of idea and phrase. Save in so far as it makes out its case along several lines, where one central argument could involve all, it is singularly concise. Given the polemic or propagandist necessity of demonstration and application from all points of view, the *Leviathan* is one of the tersest of books. Logically "watertight" it is not, but it is probably more nearly so than any treatise of its age on the same order of theme. All or nearly all but the essentials of the argument have been burnt away in a white heat of reflection; and the glittering, pointed sentences stand out like rows of weapons. No work of argument theretofore produced in English is so free of fatty tissue, so swift and direct, so instant in onset: bulky as it is, it is all organic matter, put with the terseness of Selden's *Table Talk* and the sequence of Pecock or Chillingworth. The first line of the Introduction is a philosophy in itself, and the potential solution of all the philosophic errors of his day: "*Nature,* the art whereby God hath made *and governs* the world....." And in the first three sentences of the book he is in the middle of his psychological thesis, without a breath of the customary palavering preamble. His ideal when he began to form his style had been, as the Latin prose *Vita* puts it, "that he should be able to write not floridly but Latin-like, and to master the force of words in congruity with thoughts; also that the reading should be perspicuous and facile." No man ever succeeded more perfectly in that pursuit. In the years between 1642 and 1650 there must, I

think, have taken place in Hobbes's mental life a process of deepening and quickening which was to reflect itself in the style of *Leviathan.* In the same year with that work (1651) he issued what Professor Robertson justly calls "a most rigorous translation" of the *De Cive,* under the title of *Philosophical Rudiments concerning Government and Society.* And yet the *Rudiments* is a much less interesting book than the *Leviathan,* even in point of style. It has his invariable curt clearness, but not the keenness and radiance of phrase of the larger book. In the seven or eight years between the writing of them he had seen from afar the Civil War fatally evolving itself up to the execution of the king, had himself been at the door of death, and had brooded on death and life in a strange land. The outcome was that *Leviathan* is touched with memory and experience, where the earlier books are theorisings. The later book has been re-born in passion—such passion as Hobbes could feel.

To a modern reader, accustomed to the division of labour in social, moral, and mental philosophy, there may at first seem to be no need whatever for the outworks of psychology and definition and Scripture; but a little consideration will show that every sentence is a defence against a probable rejoinder. The psychology pertains to Hobbes's naturalistic conception of the social problem: the Scripture is his shield against the supernaturalists. The theological theorists at whom Hobbes trained his guns were sure to retort with doctrines of inner light, inspiration, illumination, and Holy Writ; and at every point he has anticipated them, working all religious pleas down to the "Homo," yet with the deftest avoidance of anything like anti-Scripturalism. The modern reader

may specially wonder for a moment why such a thinker, on such bases of reason and experience, should employ the Scriptural factor at all; but it was absolutely necessary that Hobbes in his day should manipulate it if he were to make any impression on the average man. He therefore addressed himself to his task as a polemist of his age. Spinoza in the next generation had to do the same thing in the very treatise in which, following Hobbes, he maintained that religious or spiritual knowledge was no more "divine" than natural knowledge; and again in the treatise in which he shaped the case for democracy against the absolutism of Hobbes. And for Hobbes, no less than for Spinoza, the exercise was rather exhilarating than otherwise. Whatever he believed, he knew he could turn Scriptural guns on the enemy as easily as those of reason. No political party was ever at a loss for Biblical texts.

I say, "whatever he believed"; but it is pretty certain that at heart he was no Christian, and not even a theist in the strict sense of the term. The line above cited from the introduction works out as pantheism; and his repeated denial of "incorporeal substance"[1] leads to the same end. When he wrote: "It is impossible to make any profound inquiry into natural causes without being inclined thereby to believe there is one God eternal; though [men] *cannot have any idea of Him in their mind, answerable to His nature,*" he cannot conceivably have missed seeing that the term "He," as attributing a whole bundle of modes, is null in the very terms of the proposition, leaving only the name God in the sense of universe. It is true that he expressly repudiates that doctrine in the *De Cive*:—

[1] *Human Nature*, ch. xi, § 5; *Leviathan*, cc. xii, xxxiv.

> Those philosophers who said that God was the World, or the world's Soul (that is to say, a part of it), spake unworthily of God, for they attribute nothing to him, but wholly deny his being. For by the word *God* we understand the *World's cause;* but in saying that the World is God they say *that it hath no cause,* that is as much as, *there is no God.* In like manner, they who maintain the world not to be created but eternal; because there can be no cause of an eternal being. .....They also have a wretched apprehension of God, who, imputing idleness to him, do take from him the government of the world and of mankind; for say they should acknowledge him omnipotent, yet if he mind not these inferior things that same threadbare sentence will take place with them, *Quod supra nos, nihil ad nos:* What is above us doth not concern us; and seeing there is nothing for which they should either love or fear him, truly he will be to them as though he were not at all.[1]

Yet throughout this as in his other books Hobbes himself systematically "takes from God the government of the world and of mankind" in the ordinary sense of these terms. Again and again he posits it as axiomatic that "the law of nature is all of it divine";[2] that it is at the same time "naught else but the dictates of Reason";[3] and that, in sum, "God rules by nature only."[4] Again and again, too, does he stipulate that "forasmuch as God Almighty is incomprehensible.....we can have no conception or image of the Deity, and consequently all his attributes signify our inability and defect of power to conceive anything concerning his nature, and not any conception of the same, excepting only this, that there is a God."[5] It seems difficult to suppose that so acute a reasoner as Hobbes failed to see that this

[1] *Philosophical Rudiments concerning Government and Civil Society,* 1651, ch. xv, § 14; cp. *Human Nature,* ch. xi, § 3.
[2] *Rudiments,* ch. iv, § 24.
[3] *Id.* ch. iii, § 25; *De Corpore Politico,* Pt. I, ch. ii, § 1.
[4] *Rudiments,* ch. xv, §§ 8, 17. [5] *Human Nature,* ch. xi, § 2.

amounted to a bare predication of infinite existence, and difficult to doubt that his caveats against other men's pantheism were merely prudential.

And in all of Hobbes's political treatises alike, the process of demonstration is essentially non-religious, though religion is always duly introduced. In the *Human Nature* the eleventh chapter, dealing with things supernatural, is a mere insertion in the exposition: it has no radical or fundamental function. Similarly in the *De Cive* and the *De Corpore Politico* the theorem is built up without a single theological premiss. And the fifth chapter of the latter treatise is a mere appendix of texts blandly offered as "confirmation" of what has been set forth as to the laws of nature. It is as if the author said, for the benefit of conventional people: "Having proved our case by reason and argument, let us add a few Biblical quotations." In the *Leviathan* he expressly declares that the science of the laws of nature "is the true and only moral philosophy."[1] And though in saying that "natural law is the dictate of right reason" he follows Grotius,[2] he does not, like him, refer the reason back to God.[3] To Hobbes therefore would seem to be due the credit, latterly given to Bishop Cumberland, of having been "the first who endeavoured to construct a system of morals without the aid of theology."[4]

[1] Ch. xv, near end.

[2] *De Jure Belli et Pacis*, l. I, c. i, § 10. Cp. Croom Robertson, *Hobbes*, pp. 143, 214.

[3] Save incidentally. *E.g.*, *Leviathan*, ch. xxi, Routledge's ed. p. 101; ch. xxx, *end*; *De Corpore Politico*, Pt. I, ch. vi, § 1; *Rudiments*, ch. iii, § 33. It is to be noted that a hundred years later the Swiss jurist Burlamaqui, at the outset of his *Principes du Droit Naturel* (1748), saw fit to present the collection of "the rules which sheer reason prescribes to men," "considered as equally laws which God imposes on men," as "the law of nature," though his whole argument is strictly utilitarian.

[4] Buckle, *Introd. to Hist. of Civilization*, Routledge's ed. p. 240,

Every theological assumption is excluded from the definition in the first chapter of the *Human Nature*: "Man's nature is the sum of his faculties and powers, as the faculties of nutrition, motion, generation, sense, reason, etc." Even when using religious expressions, he offers the stiffest kind of challenge to the ordinary orthodoxy of his day in the closing paragraph of the fifth chapter of the *De Corpore Politico*:—

> Finally, there is no law of natural reason that can be against the law divine; for God Almighty hath given reason to a man to be a light unto him. And I hope it is no impiety to think that God Almighty will require a strict account thereof at the day of judgment, as of the instructions which we were to follow in our peregrination here, notwithstanding the opposition and affronts of supernaturalists nowadays to rational and moral conversation.

And if the religious phraseology here be calculated to save his face with people of ordinarily orthodox walk and conversation, it is otherwise with the audacious passage in which he counters the claim of those who

> will not have the law of nature to be those rules which conduce to the preservation of man's life on earth, but to the attaining of eternal felicity after death; to which they think the breach of government may conduce; and consequently to be just and reasonable. Such are they who think it a work of merit to kill or depose or rebel against the sovereign power constituted over them by their own consent. But because there is no natural knowledge of man's estate after death, much less of the reward that is then to be given to breach of faith, but only a belief grounded upon other men's saying that they know it supernaturally, or that they know those that knew them that knew others

citing Hallam and Whewell. Hallam, it is true, says "the first Christian writer"; but he seems to mean "writer of the Christian era." Cumberland's incipient naturalism, which somewhat scandalised Whewell, seems distinctly acquired from Hobbes, whom he set himself to answer.

that knew it supernaturally, breach of faith cannot be called a precept of reason or nature.[1]

Those who, with Clarendon, professed to believe that Hobbes in publishing the *Leviathan* was deliberately seeking to curry favour with Cromwell, can have given little thought to the effect that such a passage was likely to have on that ruler. With all his personal timidity and his readiness to chop texts with Bibliolaters, Hobbes was the last man to palter with a proposition for the sake of conciliating opponents. For the rest, when he wrote:[2] "In these four things, opinion of ghosts, ignorance of second causes, devotion towards what men fear, and taking of things casual for prognostications, consisteth the natural seed of 'religion,'" he must have known that he was saying what no separate asseveration of "revelation" and "the word of God" could logically countervail. All his later vindications of himself against the charge of atheism[3] are those of the finished dialectician, consummately fighting the wild beasts of bigotry that came at him open-mouthed.

V.

Over the political doctrine of the *Leviathan* there has been much debate, and this inevitably, for though it is the most coherent and best fortified plea ever made for absolutism, it had to be finally inconsistent just because it was so ratiocinative. Much of the

[1] *Leviathan,* ch. xv, ed. cited, p. 73.

[2] *Leviathan,* xii, p. 58. Cp. ch. xi, *end.*

[3] See, for instance, the prefatory note "To the King" with the *Seven Philosophical Problems,* where, referring to the "Episcopalmen" who call him "an Atheist or man of no religion," he writes: "There is no sign of it in my life; and for my religion, when I was at the point of death at St. Germains, the Bishop of Durham can bear witness of it if he be asked." It would be difficult to be more ironical, and at the same time more wary.

debate is seen to be needless when his position is clearly made out: so much lies in the definitions. That the "sovereign power" is as such necessarily irresponsible, is a truth "so perfectly plain," as Professor Croom Robertson remarks, "when it is once stated, that there is room only for marvel at the kind of objections which have been urged against it." But what is never long clear in Hobbes's system is the *location* of the sovereign power; and this is the true crux. His formulas about the natural "state of war" and the inveterate egoism and injustice of men are, I think, sound enough; and the gainsaying of them by Cumberland and many others, on the score that universal benevolence involves universal happiness, is no answer to his thesis. Hobbes fully recognises the benefits of a benevolent bias.[1] Few of his critics attend sufficiently to his proposition that "'war' consisteth not in battle only, or the act of fighting; but in a tract of time wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known";[2] and few take pains to realise what a spectacle of blind passion and tyrannous self-will he had witnessed in England during the second quarter of the seventeenth century. But when all is said, his remedy, practically considered, was only another disease, and theoretically considered it is a fallacy in terms. He grounds monarchic sovereignty on a "covenant" made by the commonwealth; and he elsewhere stipulates that the monarch is "bound to observe the laws of nature," which, as he has previously said, impose themselves "for a means of the conservation of men in multitudes."[3] But as he further says that the covenant is solely between the

[1] *Leviathan*, ch. xv; *Rudiments*, ch. iii, § 29; ch. iv, § 20.
[2] *Leviathan*, ch. xiii. Compare the *Rudiments*, pp. 7–8.
[3] *Leviathan*, ch. xv, p. 77.

subjects, to constitute the king, and that the king has made no covenant with them and therefore cannot break any, he is in the position of affirming that the king must do right, but nobody can make him ; so that the "must," in terms of his own argument, is meaningless. *Solvuntur tabulæ.*

It is the eternal dilemma of the monarchist, the dilemma in which Burke later so furiously involved himself; and the practical comment of the community, be it ever so besotted in its monarchic superstition, will always be in effect that there *are* limits, whether wide or narrow, to the "sovereign's" power. These limits are those of the acquired capacity of endurance in the subjects. The secret of Hobbes's error lies in the fact that, as Hume put it later, *all* government rests on opinion : that is to say, the real sovereignty lies with the balance of physical power, which can never be in one man. The "people" is sovereign *if it will be;* and in that final sense the sovereign is clearly irresponsible. But the collective like the single sovereign is led by every dictate of common sense to govern its will by customary codes and institutions ; and at any given moment the real sovereignty is incalculably distributed throughout the whole composed by the multitudinous wills and their common organs. To vest it arbitrarily in the hereditary monarch is a psychological no less than an ethical fallacy.

It is vain to plead, on the other hand, that such concentration is the only safeguard against the state of war. Systematic tyranny *is,* by Hobbes's own definition, the state of war, inasmuch as the tyrant's violence is always to be feared. And even chronic anarchy is less fatal to the higher life of men than the "stark constringent serpent, fold on fold," of a

fixed despotism. Tumultuous Republican Italy could produce in a hundred years more pre-eminent minds than Spain and Austria have brought forth since Calderon. But the final and vital dismissal of Hobbes's theorem, as theorem, is the plain historic fact that, had it been accepted before his day, not a page of his that has permanent importance would ever have appeared. By his theory, Church and king should decide what is true doctrine in religion, and no other should be allowed a hearing. Yet the *Leviathan* contains a thousand sayings that no Church and no king in that day would have authorised; and his subsequent plea that he wrote while Church and king were overthrown is a virtual admission that he knew he was writing what they would never have sanctioned. To their temporary subversion, in fact, he owes his literary immortality.

When once this is realised, it is hardly possible, from the point of view of any political school, to go on regarding Hobbes with resentment. The game is too obviously up. On the other hand, all political science has gained something from his great performance, of which the fallacy is profoundly different in effect from the fallacies it assailed. At one stroke he brought order and reason into what had been a chaos of internecine theological dogma and conflicting pedantries; and so far was he from misleading the good heads that we find Spinoza soon afterwards respectfully accepting nearly the whole of his analysis, and yet proceeding to build on it a political ethic of freedom. Though Hobbes did doubtless encourage the more secular-minded royalists in their royalism, it is an entire misconception to credit him with the rapid development of the doctrine of Divine Right after the Restoration. That was essentially

the work of the clergy, who detested his whole way of reasoning, and who would have framed their dogma all the same if he had written nothing. Tories like Clarendon opposed him from first to last; for Hobbes's doctrine was so far removed from Toryism proper that it was held by the Tories to offer as much sanction to the rule of Cromwell as to the rule of the Stuarts, though Hobbes certainly desired and welcomed the Restoration, and never sought, as some pretended, to win Cromwell's favour.

Hobbes had, in fact, an influence distinct from that of ordinary partisan propaganda, in that he set up new movements of thought on both sides. By his insistence on his royalism he alienated many royalists; and on the other hand, by his own avowal, he reconciled many to tacit acceptance of the rule of Cromwell for the time being. Between him and the regicides, certainly, there could be no pretence of fraternity. He had been ready to print in 1668 his verdict on the "two books, one written by Salmasius, a Presbyterian, against the murder of the king, another written by Milton, an English Independent, in answer to it.....They are very good Latin both, and hardly to be judged which is better; and both very ill reasoning, hardly to be judged which is worse; like two declamations *pro* and *con,* made for exercise only in a rhetoric school by one and the same man. So like is a Presbyterian to an Independent."[1] It is not unlikely that Milton knew of this judgment when he indicated that he "did not like Mr. Hobbes at all, but he would acknowledge him to be a man of great parts and a learned man."[2] Yet Hobbes's rationalising way must in a multitude of cases have led men to political conclusions far removed from his. Such

[1] *Behemoth,* ed. 1682, pp. 169–170. [2] Told by his widow to Aubrey.

virtue is there in the play of reason. The politicians of his philosophic school, among whom we may partly reckon Blount, and even Shaftesbury (though that peer would have been much provoked by the suggestion) soon showed that they were not available for a policy of divine right.

And if Hobbes did sin against the light, he was duly punished in his lifetime by endless abuse, and not a little menace. He had gone so far in his apriorism as to argue that the Church was the proper interpreter of Scripture, since it was on the credit of the Church that the supernatural origin of the Scriptures was received; though he had impeached the claims of the Papacy on that very score as a primary source of political conflict. But such service gained him no truce from the Anglican clergy, who fomented a Parliamentary demand for the burning of his book, and were probably the means of stopping the pension of £100 allowed him for some years by Charles II. That had never meant very intelligent discipleship. Clarendon, in the dedication to Charles of his *Brief View of the Leviathan,* published in his second exile, tells how he had often tried vainly to get the king to read some parts of Hobbes's book with attention, "in confidence they would be no sooner read than detested by you." It is not to-day difficult to understand why the solemn statesman failed to persuade his unsanctified charge either to grapple with the folio or to excommunicate its author, who was at least as useful to the crown as was Clarendon. Hobbes had taught the hopeful prince mathematics in the years of exile; and Charles enjoyed his wit; but none the less refused him permission to print his *Behemoth;*[1] so

[1] This title, by the way, was not of Hobbes's choosing. He himself obeyed the King's veto, and withheld the MS. from

little did Hobbes's dry way of telling the story of the Rebellion suit the taste of the majority of royalists. Technically speaking, he was "more royalist than the king"; and his caustic censure of less thorough zealots was more than they could be expected to endure. Hobbes was, in fact, too inveterately and essentially a rationaliser to be tolerable to any school of traditionalists; and even if he had not in the *Leviathan* laid the foundations of destructive Biblical criticism and of constructive atheism, his way of reaching his political views would have been hateful to theologians. In his conclusive handling of the problem of Free-will alone, as his triumphant battle with Bramhall showed, he was fatal to the theological standpoint—the standpoint, that is, of those Christians who stand between the horns of the dilemma of Calvinism and rationalism. On many points of philosophy Hobbes is arbitrary and inadequate. On this he is inexpugnable.

VI.

To such trenchant power of reasoning as is shown by Hobbes in that discussion, the limit was set only by his own temperament, which was such that what Bacon called the "tincture of will" could at any moment affect his intellectual processes where his theme was concrete, or where, on an abstract problem, he was beyond his depth. In politics, we have seen, his course begins and ends in his personal equation. He had never thought out the laws of social evolution as a whole; never studied the reactions of despotic

publication. In 1679, however, some months before his death, it was published, without his authority, from a surreptitious and imperfect copy; and the publisher invented the title *Behemoth* in emulation of *Leviathan*. Hobbes pronounced it foolish. See review of Tönnies' ed. in Croom Robertson's *Philosophical Remains*, 1894, p. 451.

rule on mental or even on economic life. Reading Thucydides, the forever impressive historian of Greek civil war, he strode at once to the conclusion that anything was better than a democracy which ran to such convulsion. From that moment, if not before, his mind was made up for absolutism. He never asked what came of the higher civilisation under either the Alexandrian or the Roman imperialism which followed on the democratic failure; never asked whether there was no middle way between civil war and autocracy. What he produced, brilliant and fruitfully provocative as it was, fell short of science: it was the masterly justification of a prejudice.

And at times, in his less contentious psychological analysis, the bias of character curiously affects his results, even when he is most original. One is struck, even at this distance of literary and scientific time, by the penetrating force of some of the generalisations in the *Human Nature,* as where he pronounces that the measure of joy is the aid it gives to life.[1] Yet the thesis is bound up with quite pre-scientific dogmas as to "motion about the heart" and "motion in the head"; and is shortly followed by the startling analysis of personal beauty as a "sign precedent of power generative."[2] The famous generalisation as to laughter, again, is withheld from scientific thoroughness by the temperamental view. He concludes, after some very shrewd analysis, that "the passion of laughter is nothing else but sudden glory arising from some sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmity of others, or with our own formerly."[3] The analysis is clearly

[1] Work cited, ch. vii. Compare Spinoza, *Ethica,* III, Propp. xi, xii.

[2] *Human Nature,* ch. viii.

[3] *Id.* ch. ix, § 13.

imperfect: there are kinds of laughter which elude it—the laughter of sheer pleasure, of hysteria, of sympathy. Mandeville, in the next age, at once saw as much, and urged that "laughter is a *mechanical* motion, which we are naturally thrown into when we are unaccountably pleased"[1]—which definition, however, also fails to clear the problem, though it widens it. Much of the psychology of Hobbes is thus vitiated by the spirit of system.

In noting such miscarriages we must not forget that in collateral problems of psychology Hobbes is at times felicitously original, as in his demonstration, before Descartes, of the subjectivity of colour,[2] and his remarkable shot, before Newton, at a definition and a theory of the relation of light to colour. His solution is that "Colour must be the same thing with light.....; their difference being only this, that when light cometh directly from the fountain to the eye, or indirectly by reflection from clean and polite bodies, and such as have not any particular motion internal to alter it, we call it light; but when it cometh to the eye by reflection from uneven, rough, and coarse bodies (or such as are affected with internal motion of their own that may alter it), then we call it colour; colour and light differing only in this, that the one is *pure*, the other *perturbed* light." The originality of the doctrine as to the subjectivity of colour and sound has been recognised;[3] and the treatment of the problem of colour is perhaps no less noteworthy. Equally independent was his handling of the principle of the association of ideas.[4] But the very felicity of

[1] *Fable of the Bees*, Dial. iv. Ed. 1772, ii, 130.
[2] *Human Nature*, ch. ii, §§ 8, 9.
[3] Lewes, *History of Philosophy*, 4th ed. ii, 232–3; Hallam, *Literature of Europe*, ed. 1872, iii, 100.
[4] Cp. Whewell, *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy*, 1862,

such speculations was a snare to the speculator; and it was the fostered element of wilfulness in him that laid Hobbes finally open to a destructive assault on his mathematics. Always reverting to that, his foible, he gave opening after opening to men like Wallis of Oxford, a shifty personage who had the mathematical gift which Hobbes lacked; and though the old philosopher's vain shots at the squaring of the circle were hilariously exposed again and again, to the extent of making him perpetually reconstruct his hopeless case, he would return to the fight, spending thus too much of the intellectual credit he had gained by his psychology and politology. At length Wallis, who had all along been inspired by his dislike of Hobbes as a thinker, made a rascally attempt to stigmatise him as having played traitor to the royalist cause, and as teaching atheism; and this gave Hobbes his opportunity, in the open letter entitled "Considerations upon the Reputation, Loyalty, Manners, and Religion of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury," not only to clear himself, but to show that Wallis had actually played traitor and turncoat *in excelsis*. Beaten on his mathematics, though he apparently could never see it, Hobbes annihilated his antagonist on the personal issue. It is a tremendous execution; and the diction might seem to disprove what has been said above as to his not having greatly hated his enemies; but I think the old gentleman so perfectly enjoyed the frightful peppering he was giving his adversary that his frame of mind must be regarded as artistic rather than homicidal. The result is that

p. 55; Mackintosh, *On the Progress of Ethical Philosophy*, ed. 1872, p. 301. Coleridge's assertion, in the *Biographia Literaria*, that Hobbes in this matter had been preceded by Descartes, is shown by Mackintosh to be a blunder.

while Wallis's mathematical papers, having done their work, soon ceased to be reprinted, Hobbes's tract remains to maintain a firm impression that the mathematician was personally a knave. It is capital reading to this day.

VII.

Taken as a whole, with its illustrious success and its strenuous failures, Hobbes's is a wonderful life. Born in the year of the Armada, he lasted till 1679, dying at the age of over ninety-one. To the very last he was writing and disputing; yet not always or merely disputing. At the age of eighty-seven he had actually produced a translation of Homer in rhymed quatrains, taking two years to the task, having, he said, nothing else to do, and being disposed to give his opponents something new to criticise. It was not exactly an artistic triumph: poetry was hardly more his forte than mathematics, despite his deep instinct for style; but it is one of the monuments of his energy of brain. He had outlived two generations of the house of Devonshire, which handsomely gave him a home to the last, respecting rather the memories of his fealty than his doctrine and reputation. The young earl to whom he had in youth been a companion he kept to the last in loving recollection.

> Non dominus tantum, verum et amicus erat
> Pars erat illa meæ multo dulcissima vitæ,
> Et nunc saepe mihi somnia grata facit,

he writes,[1] with an unwonted pathos, at the age of eighty-four. Not again was the tie between him and the house of his patrons so closely knit. It is told that the last of the three earls under whom he lived

[1] *Vita carmine expressa*, 70–72.

"would often express an abhorrence of some of his principles in policy and religion; and both he and his lady would put off the mention of his name and say, he was a humorist, and nobody could account for him." In no well-regulated British home of that day, indeed, could such a figure be quite reverently regarded; and the household seems to have found matter for amusement[1] in his fears of persecution when, in his seventy-ninth year, a panic-stricken Parliament characteristically set about appeasing the Deity which had sent the Great Fire after the Great Plague, by taking proceedings against freethinkers. Two were singled out, firstly his friend the Catholic priest White, who like him had denied the doctrine of a natural immortality;[2] and secondly the arch-skeptic himself.

About this time, it seems, he paid some attendance at the family chapel, apparently at the instance of his patron, seeing that he never went to church either in town or country.[3] Even at chapel he attended only prayers, escaping from the sermons of the chaplain, Dr. Jasper Mayne, whom he reckoned "a very silly fellow." The clergy on their part could be trusted to say worse things of him. To the French traveller Monconys, who met him in London in 1663, he told how the clergy of both churches detested him; and Sorbière, who infuriated that generation of Englishmen by the criticisms with which he repaid their hospitality, tells how the king in private conversation humorously compared him to "a bear whom they baited with dogs to try him."[4] For the clergy he

[1] Croom Robertson, *Hobbes*, p. 195.
[2] In the treatise *Of the Middle State of Souls*, Latin, 1652; English, 1659. See Croom Robertson, *Hobbes*, p. 194.
[3] *Id.* p. 195.
[4] References in Buckle, Routledge's ed. pp. 220–1.

combined the two supremely hated characters of an unbeliever and an Erastian[1]—as it were, Satan in the flesh. And so far did the clerical view prevail that in the next generation Locke, whose "Christian minimum" is practically Hobbes's, and who certainly derived from Hobbes, however circuitously, his doctrine of the association of ideas, appears not to have studied it in his pages, and goes out of his way to decry his unread predecessor.[2] Hobbes's politics, doubtless, would suffice to alienate a steady liberal like Locke.

Yet, with all the clergy and half of literary England against him, the sheer power of Hobbes as a thinker and writer rebuilt his European fame year by year and decade by decade. Spinoza took him as master in the departments in which he was masterly, and constantly shows his influence; Leibnitz extolled him; Harrington, differing seriously from him on many issues, declared that his treatises on *Human Nature* and *Liberty and Necessity* were "the greatest of new lights, and those which I have followed and shall follow"; and expressed the firm belief "that Mr. Hobbes is, and will in future ages be accounted, the best writer at this day in the world." And nearly a century after his death the cordial Diderot, meeting for the first time with his *Treatise of Human Nature,* broke out in admiration for that, which is not its author's greatest performance: "How diffuse and flabby seems Locke, how poor and petty La Rochefoucauld and La Bruyère, in comparison with this Thomas Hobbes!"

[1] "If there is anything that ecclesiastical dogmatists of all parties unite in hating with a perfect hatred, it is the Erastian view of the relation of the State to religious differences."—Sir F. Pollock, *Spinoza,* 2nd ed. p. 32.

[2] See Lewes, *History of Philosophy,* ii, 242–3.

Some of us still feel somewhat so, with mild qualifications. To turn from the flood of defiled English that rolls through our newspapers, bad form for bad matter, to the crystal purity of speech[1] and bracing strength of thought of this rare old dialectician, is like passing from London smoke to the primal air and ancient massiveness of the hills. And if in his staunch championship of his bias he seems at times not a little perverse, we in these days need have small difficulty in realising that the inborn unreason and brutal frowardness of the mass of men could very well make him so. It is not for the descendants of the Puritans, negators of equity and frustrators of all concord, rebels against light weights of tyranny and binders of camel-loads of it on others, to impeach him as against them. He was as honest a man as they, and many times as wise, not to say a hundred times more interesting. In the nineteenth century the men to rebuild his fame were the Philosophical Radicals, who were drawn to him above all things by his faculty of reasoning, that spirit of judgment which overleaps all barriers of faith and of prejudice, and makes Thomas Aquinas and Jonathan Edwards valued intellectual companions for many unbelievers.

[1] The editor of the 1830 reprint of the translation of Thucydides saw fit so to arrange that "the language of Hobbes, in many places quite obsolete, and therefore obscure, has been modernised," thus giving the public a blemished version of an English classic. Hobbes needs no modernising for any educated or studious reader. All the while, the editor has left an abundance of "obsolete" forms, such as "insidiation," "prizes propounded of fighting with fists," "constant to their dwellings," "anything stepped into years," "confining" in the sense of "contiguous," "artificially" in the sense of "skilfully," "doctrinal valour" in the sense of "inculcated valour," "mollification" in the sense of "enervation," "practice" in the sense of "treachery," and so on. Obscurities in plenty remain for those who can read only modern English; but the student has no faithful Hobbesian text. No other translator, however, so perfectly conveys the Thucydidean flavour,

Nor is there lacking in Hobbes's case, with all his Toryism, a due touch of human kindness. "He was very charitable," says Aubrey, "to those that were true objects of his bounty. One time, I remember, going in the Strand, a poor and infirm old man begged his alms; he, beholding him with eyes of pity and compassion, put his hand in his pocket and gave him sixpence. Said a divine (Dr. Jasper Mayne) that stood by, 'Would you have done this if it had not been Christ's command?' 'Yea,' said he. 'Why?' quoth the other. 'Because,' said he, 'I was in pain to consider the miserable condition of the old man; and now my alms, giving him some relief, doth also ease me.'" It is not recorded whether Dr. Jasper Mayne gave sixpence because of Christ's command Hobbes told the whole truth in his answer, anticipating the verdict of Mandeville, who likewise was called all manner of evil names for his doctrine. But the world is not the less sympathetic because such men have taught it to analyse sympathy.

SPINOZA

I.

SOME names in philosophy carry with them a certain atmosphere of character, an aura, as the theosophists say, of individuality, that ultimately secures for the attendant system some such earnestness of hearing as is given in old tales to the wandering wise man whose mere mien proclaims him the Sage. A very interesting body of doctrine may miss this credential, and a very inelaborate one may carry it; but it can hardly alight save upon one that stands for some real mental greatness. Aristotle attained to it in virtue of his large grasp of knowledge and his calm-browed, unwearying scrutiny of every theme; Plato, for a narrower world, holds it in virtue of a golden eloquence and a certain poetic elevation of spirit; Lucretius conquers it by a stern, an intense sincerity of song; Marcus Aurelius by a benign nobility of self-discipline. Here and there, in far spaces of history, it seems to fall on one or another head, on Lao-Tsze and Mencius, Kapila and Gautama; the men who could transcend the spell of inheritance and reach what Nietzsche calls a new valuation. In some sort the stamp belongs to Thomas Aquinas, in virtue of his incongruous gift of doubt; but it is a badge the Christian does not easily earn. Berkeley, I think, lacks it, despite a high degree of intellectuality; and the profounder Hume, again, must make his unique impression without it. For a time Kant seemed to

possess it, but the mark grows fainter; and Hegel, with all his power, some of us think, never had it. Howsoever those things be, it is past question that the sign rests upon Spinoza.

No philosopher has had quite such a fortune as his—to infuriate the majority in his own generation; to make then only undistinguished or unavowed disciples, yet to dig there and then a new channel for philosophy; to make a philosophic path for science without the impulse of a scientific need; and to win, period by period, the ready or reluctant homage of the most individual minds, holding the most disparate points of view. From theists who, like Jacobi and Coleridge, counted him in different senses the annihilator of theism; from theists like Hegel, who found him hyper-theistic; from naturalists like Goethe, for whom Theos was still a weighty term; from critical atheists; from thinkers at every point of the compass —from Lessing, from Matthew Arnold, from James Martineau, from Charles Bradlaugh—he has had the tribute of intellectual respect, and of gratitude for help to comprehensive thinking.

Considering that but a few of those readers endorsed his philosophy in full, there must be something specifically personal in his impact and influence. If, as so many still do, we reckon the progress of human thought as a development of the "genius" of different nations, we shall find a curious problem to solve in the case of Spinoza. It is not indeed certain that he was of pure Jewish descent; for in Spain, whence, through Christian Portugal, his stock came to Holland, there had been received into Judaism a considerable number of non-Hebrews in the tolerant Moorish period. Still, a Jew he must be reckoned; since on any view his stock must have mixed with

that of Hebrews; though one can fancy a believer in "race" explaining the case by the hypothesis of cross-breeding. Coming of the race which has ostensibly been the means of imposing on modern Europe the most rigidly unphilosophical of all cosmic conceptions, that of an infinite God creative of and external to the universe, Spinoza has been of all professed philosophers the most instrumental in putting that conception aside. From his race he had his due reward. At the age of twenty-three, before he had written a page for publication, though already of high repute in his circle for learning and sagacity, he was recognised in his father's synagogue—that of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews at Amsterdam—as a heretic; and the sound commercial instinct of the rulers of the synagogue led them to offer him a pension of 1,000 florins on condition that he should return to the true faith. On his indignantly refusing this he was called to meet the charges of heresy brought against him by two spying associates.

As reconstructed by recent research,[1] the record runs that he was not at once excommunicated; time being given him to repent between the first and the final stages of the sentence. A devout member of the synagogue, however, could not wait for the slow course of rabbinical justice, and at some stage in the case, when Spinoza was leaving the synagogue, struck at him with a dagger, which the young heretic managed to avoid, receiving the blow in the collar of his overcoat, which he thenceforth preserved as a memento. The story is declared by his biographer,

[1] This seems to accept the narrative of Lucas, which was formerly treated as untrustworthy. Lucas tells of a long course of ferreting and inquisition. See his sketch printed as an *Appendice* in the French edition of Spinoza by Saisset, after the life by Colerus, vol. ii.

Colerus [Köhler], to have been repeatedly told by Spinoza to his housemates at The Hague, years after. Such an episode he justly regarded as a reason for leaving Amsterdam. It is even said, on doubtful authority, that the synagogue petitioned the magistrates for his expulsion; and that, on the magistrates referring the case to the Christian Synod, that congenial body recommended them to do as they were asked. Whether or not he was officially ordered to go, go he did.

One reason for doubting the last story is that it seems to have been only after his departure that he was excommunicated. Had the synagogue been bent on driving him away, it would presumably have banned him to begin with. The curse, which has been preserved,[1] has nearly all the grotesque malignity of which pietism is capable—nearly, but not quite, for there was a worse curse, reserved for blasphemy—but when we find that afterwards the synagogue tried to get the accursed one back to its bosom, we are encouraged in a suspicion that the curse was for at least some of the cursers something in the nature of a conscious mummery, a parade of skull and cross-bones to scare the exploratory heretic back into the old paths.

Modern Jewish partisans, claiming Spinoza for the race while reprobating his departure from it, explain that the excommunication, with its curse, was a "purely defensive measure"—a proposition which supplies a broad ground for the otherwise ill-founded

[1] The short form given by Colerus, after Selden, who quoted from Maimonides, is a mere garbled summary. The full Hebrew text is given by Van Vloten, with a Latin translation, in his edition of Spinoza's works. An English translation is given by Dr. Willis in the Life prefixed to his *Benedict de Spinoza*, 1870, pp. 34–5. The excommunication cited from Tract. *Colbo* by Selden, *De Jure Naturale et Gentium*, l. iv, ch. 7, is different.

charge that the Jew continues to lack the sense of humour. But it is unnecessary now to lay stress on the fact that the long-persecuted Jews were themselves bigots and persecutors in grain, even while suffering from the spirit they had generated. The Spanish curse passed by the Hispano-Portuguese synagogue in Amsterdam on July 6th, 1656, had the effect of fully cosmopolitanising its victim; and Baruch d'Espinoza became Benedict de Spinoza. His name, Baruch, meant "blessed"; and his kindred had cursed it: he changed it in time to the form which had the same sense in the tongue specially affected by their enemies, the Christians, who in turn cursed him at large in their own way. "The most impious atheist that ever lived" was the description of him by a contemporary Protestant pastor, Burman of Enkhuise.[1] But he had somehow inherited a mind and a temperament which no curse could change; and it was his destiny to show as no other had ever done that a Jew could be tolerant above other men, and could transcend in his thinking alike Judaism and Christianity. With liberal Christians and with freethinkers alike he was able to live in good-fellowship. A freethinking physician, Van den Ende, had taught him Latin and Greek; and when he left Amsterdam it was to stay with a Christian heretic friend, a Memnonite. With him he spent several years, some of them at the village of Rhynsberg, where his friend's sect had a settlement.

The personal interest enveloping Spinoza is unbroken to the end of his life. He had been designed by his parents for rabbiship, and had been schooled accordingly; but in the wise Jewish way he had also

[1] Colerus, *Vie de Spinoza*.

been taught a trade. It was a felicitously symbolical one. Holland was then to the front in all scientific industries: and Baruch was a scientific-instrument maker, a grinder of lenses for spectacles, microscopes, and telescopes, making them so well as to win a reputation in that capacity. On the proceeds of this skilled and well-paid craftsmanship he was able to live when turned out of his father's house by the excommunication; and though latterly he was provided for, he entirely maintained himself for a considerable part of his too short life, in which he produced, besides his exposition of the philosophy of Descartes, his Hebrew grammar, and other minor works, the two most famous theological and philosophical treatises of his time, the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* and the *Ethica*.

A rich young friend and admirer, Simon de Vries, pressed upon him 2,000 florins, to be spent on comforts or as he would; but Spinoza genially declined, saying he should not know what to do with it. Finding himself near death, De Vries wished to make Spinoza his sole legatee; but the philosopher reminded him of the existence of a brother, his natural and rightful heir; and to that brother the fortune was left, under stipulation that a sufficient annuity be paid to Spinoza. The brother liberally offered one of 500 florins, but even this had to be reduced to 300 before Spinoza would accept it. From the Grand Pensionary, John de Witt—who on this score may be inferred to have been a free-thinker—he further accepted a pension of a hundred florins. After the murder of the great statesman by the brutish Jingo mob, the heirs showed a hesitation about continuing the payment, whereupon Spinoza returned to them the deed conferring it. The

payment was then at once resumed, and continued till his death.

It is interesting to note that while Spinoza thus cared so little to be rich, and further declined to earn a pension from the French king by the easy act of dedicating a book to him, he would not submit to being insolently denied his birthright in his own family. At his father's death his sisters claimed to disinherit him under the excommunication. *They* had not been liberally educated; and like the daughters of Milton they showed how such injustice may recoil on the dominant sex. Spinoza firmly went to law with them, holding that to resist such illegality was part of a citizen's duty; but on winning his case he waived the right he had established, and took only a bed for his portion—a very good one, be it remembered—leaving to his sisters the rest.

Perhaps for him the family bed was the symbol of the domesticity he was to have in no other form. He never married. There is a story that he was in love with Van den Ende's daughter, a learned but a lively maiden; and that a wealthier suitor, a fellow-pupil, cut him out. Examination of dates shows that when Spinoza is said to have sought her hand she was only twelve years old; and that the other man was probably not a fellow-pupil. Still, it is shown to be likely that Spinoza, during the years in which he lived near Amsterdam, kept up some intercourse with the Van den Ende family; and as the maiden did not marry till twenty-seven, there may have been something between them. Recent writers, whether believing or doubting on that head, seem to overlook one important detail in the narrative of Colerus, which at this point has not been invalidated. The maiden was a Roman Catholic—doubtless made so by her

mother—and the man whom she married consented to renounce his Protestantism for her sake. Thus it may have been that Spinoza lost his love as he lost his home because of religion. Were he a suitor—and he seems to have been confessedly an admirer—the priests would make the woman put to him the condition she finally put to the other. In that case Spinoza had chosen the better part. He was not the man to balance his convictions against any other good; and henceforth he renounced the thought of that conjugal life which to the Jew counts for more than it does to other men. According to one story, there was a pang left, for he told a friend that the loved one was "rarely gifted with understanding, possessed of much good sense, and moreover of a lively and pleasant disposition." Once again, on that view, he had intimately realised how much religion can do to sunder hearts and lives. And in any case he was virtually precluded from marriage, in his day and generation, by his opinions.

After various flittings Spinoza settled at The Hague about 1669. Thus far, though he had had a considerable local reputation among students of philosophy, some of whom looked up to him as a master, he had published only his exposition of Descartes, with its appendix of his own *Cogitata Metaphysica* (1663). This at once gave him the public status of a trained thinker; but it does not present the main features of his special philosophy, which he only slowly evolved. Not till 1670 did he publish his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus,* which, while ere long raising against him a host of furious theological enemies, gained him the private adherence of not a few of the more enlightened. A Swiss Lieutenant-Colonel in the French army, named Stoupe, of freethinking proclivities, persuaded

the great Condé to invite him to the French camp at Utrecht; and in Condé's enforced absence the invitation was followed up by the general in command. Spinoza accepted, his philosophy vetoing for him any principle of racial enmity. So high did his scholarly credit go that in 1673 he was offered a chair in the German university of Heidelberg, with a not very broad hint that he was of course expected to be prudent. The hint, however, was enough; and on the score that the degree of restraint on his liberty was indefinite, he courteously declined. He had other reasons, however, for declining. Already his health was shaken; and from 1674 he was a confirmed invalid. Suffering on the one hand from intermittent fever, and on the other from lung disease—the two scourges of Holland in that period—he cut down his chances of life by his extraordinary abstemiousness, which was that of a Spaniard rather than of a Jew. He is certified to have lived frequently on some twopence halfpenny a day, taking only a little milk-soup with butter, and a little beer, or gruel and butter and a few raisins; this not from avarice or lack of means, but apparently from sheer lack of the alimentary instinct. All the while he took next to no exercise, and ground glass for a living. And so it came about that he died early in 1677, a little over forty-three years old.

In the usual orthodox fashion, he was declared to have died in a state of despair for his past impiety; but his hostile clerical biographer, Colerus, who questioned his Christian housemates on the subject, testifies that there is not a shadow of truth in the story. He died as he had lived, with a singular serenity. He had never been seen greatly elated or greatly depressed, says Colerus; but it is on record

that when he heard of the hideous murder of the De Witts he burst into a passion of tears, and would have risked his life by publicly denouncing it, had he not been forcibly withheld. His writings again and again show, indeed, that his self-control covered a profound repugnance to the evil passions around him. Still, as philosophers and philosophies go, he had fairly contrived to live his philosophy. And we seem to understand it all a little better when we scan the serene portrait which has been reproduced in Dr. Martineau's *Study of Spinoza.*[1] Though there has thus far been no question of its authenticity, the painter does not seem to be known; but if it be genuine, the excellent photograph taken for Dr. Martineau from the original in the Wolfenbüttel Library would seem to reveal, what the previous engravings did not, that the artist had skill enough to suggest the thinker's personality, with its grave calm, its penetration, its high intellectuality, and the wistful something that philosophy could not charm away.

All told and all sold, Spinoza's worldly goods, including lenses, amounted to £40 worth; and his business-like sister Rebecca decided beforehand not to administer the estate, the debts and funeral costs coming rather near the probable assets; which doubtless ran as high as they did because of the wish of friends to buy memorials. Most of his books had already been distributed. Among the non-saleable

[1] It was copied in *The Reformer* for January, 1900. There is also a reduced copy in Dr. John Caird's *Spinoza* in the Philosophical Classics series. It should be avowed that, whereas the eyes in the Wolfenbüttel portrait are large, Lucas speaks of Spinoza's eyes as *small* and keen; and that Colerus does not describe them at all. It is to be hoped that there has been no mistake about the portrait. Both Lucas and Colerus say that Spinoza's hair was curled. That in the portrait is very long, but not curled.

assets was the manuscript of the *Ethics,* which Rebecca would doubtless have burned had it come in her way, but which had been promptly passed on, at the dying man's wish, to a publisher. He had planned to publish it in 1675; but the rumour got abroad that he was producing a book on God which showed there was no God; a complaint was lodged by the clergy with the Stadthouder and the magistrates; and the orthodox Cartesians, anxious to repudiate him, joined in the general denunciation. So the book was withheld by him during his life; only to appear the more effectually after his death. It is the decisive expression of his pantheism, the philosophic negation of the religion of prayer and miracle, wrath and retribution, salvation and damnation. And it is finally in virtue of his profound negations—let the lovers of platitude note it—that Spinoza's philosophy is permanently valid.

II.

It is well to approach Spinoza's philosophy through his life, for it was through his human experience that he built it up. The quasi-mathematical form given alike to his early work, the exposition of Descartes, and to his late *Ethics,* suggests a mind peculiarly given to "dry" reasoning. But the logical form is only the last refinement of feeling: it is the determined reduction to reasoned statement of feelings whereof the entire sincerity can be proved in so far only as they can be shown to be logically consistent. In the preface to his early but unfinished treatise, *De Intellectus Emendatione,* as Dr. John Caird has noted, he tells us that his philosophy took its rise "not primarily in the search for intellectual satisfaction, but in the endeavour to discover some true and

abiding object of love, something in which he would find a perfect and eternal joy—a joy which could not be found in the ordinary objects of human desire—in riches, honour, the pleasures of appetite and sense." The things of common life he found "vain and futile," and the things about which he was wont to be agitated had in them nothing either really good or really evil in themselves. That is to say, he began his search consciously in the spirit in which typically or "ideally" religious men follow religion. Between the *Imitatio Christi* and the procedure of Spinoza there is more conformity of spirit than is to be found between that treatise and the attitude of most Christians. The difference is determined by the play of the critical faculty, which in Spinoza was as strong as the religious craving.

The first question we have to ask is, What started him on the path of freethinking? What made him begin to criticise the bibliolatrous creed of his race? Was it spontaneous doubt; or was the doubt aroused from the outside? Did his emotional nature, his moral sensibility, primarily set him against the dogmatics which, among the Jews as among the Christians around him, failed to promote either love or justice? The first clue is in a story told by Lucas, with the comment that the teachings of his father, a man of good sense, "greatly contributed" to set him against superstition, and to make him distinguish between that and solid piety. One day, when he was about ten years old, the father sent him to receive payment of a sum due to him by an old Jewess. The boy found her reading her Bible, and she signed to him to wait till she had finished her prayer. Then, when he had given his message, she counted out the money on the table, and entered into a eulogy of his father

as a true follower of the law of Moses, proceeding to pile up the coins and put them in his bag. He, warned by his father's counsels, insisted on counting them, and found that she had slipped two below the table. His father applauding him, he was henceforth habitually on guard against pious pretences.[1] The story must be taken for what it is worth; but when we collate with it the fact that a moral enthusiasm was Spinoza's ruling quality on the side of feeling, and that in his family his orthodox sisters were antipathetic to him, it seems likely enough that he thus received his lead to rationalism.

From that point onward the progression seems clear. From Van den Ende, a man of masterful personality[2] and a known materialist, he was pretty sure to receive some impetus. Finally, he is known to have come early in contact with some members of the Memnonite community[3]—men of the old type of anti-clerical heretic which grew up among the priest-ridden Christian Greeks, and which passed on its spirit to Western Europe in the movement of the Paulicians in the Middle Ages. Without priests, without articles of faith, without the prejudices of the Christian sects, they presented to the thoughtful Jewish boy the spectacle of a community quietly insisting on mental freedom, yet caring no less for right conduct, and attaining both as no other sect did. Here was leading enough. And when to all these influences was added the provocation set up by his domineering rabbi, Morteira,[4] a dogmatist and a pedant, it is not hard to understand how a boy of such

[1] See the narrative in Saisset's ed. ii, pp. lii, liii.

[2] He was a strong republican, and was ultimately executed in France for alleged complicity in a plot. See Colerus.

[3] Cp. Martineau, *A Study of Spinoza*, pp. 14–19.

[4] As to whom see Martineau, pp 10–11.

quietly tenacious character as Spinoza always showed would be forced more and more, as his mind grew, into an attitude of criticism towards Talmudic and Biblical marvels alike. The dagger episode, again, would not tend to soften him.

If further influence were needed, it was supplied by the study of physical science, then breaking through the bonds of theology on all hands. It was the age of the beginnings of the Royal Society in England, of the work of Descartes in France. When the young Spinoza turned his Latin to the account of reading that master, his destiny as a thinker was fixed. To the system of Descartes all his thinking "orients" itself. It was long ago shown, indeed, that Spinoza's pantheism is derived from many sources[1]—from the Hebrew Cabbala and the Hebrew writers of the Middle Ages, from Giordano Bruno, from Hobbes, even from the scholastics[2]—and it is told by Lucas that he wrote his early exposition of Descartes rather by way of pacifying Cartesians than for his own satisfaction. But the immense stimulus which Descartes gave to thought throughout Europe can hardly have failed to tell in the case of so receptive a mind as Spinoza's. The traces, indeed, are obvious enough to have kept on foot all along a criticism to the effect that he was merely a Cartesian gone wrong. In reality he transcended Descartes: beginning as his disciple, he ended, on the side of ethic and philosophic synthesis, by superseding him.

[1] Cp. Caird, *Spinoza*, cc. ii, iii, iv, v.

[2] Saisset, quoting from Spinoza the phrases *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, speaks of "son langage bizarre et expressif." (*Œuvres de Spinoza*, 1861, i, 238.) The phrases in question were in common use among the scholastics, and are at least as old as Thomas Aquinas.

III.

Many experts have set themselves to trace the evolution and the structure of Spinoza's system; and nearly all agree that it is not technically coherent, not "watertight." Given his premiss or bias, this was nearly inevitable. To set out to find in the totality of things an object of love is to beg the scientific question. Love is, in the nature of things, a function of personality, naturally to be exercised towards personalities. In Spinoza the great gift of love was, as we have seen, repelled in his family and in his race, and frustrated where it would have gone out towards a woman of the race of his adoption. Around him was an unruly world of Christian hatreds—the world which slew Barneveldt and exiled Grotius. There remained to him, as to all good men, some priceless friendships; but given a mind of his breadth, a mind which nothing but a synthesis of the universe could satisfy on the side of philosophic theory, the thwarted intensities of feeling quite naturally sought a solution on the same scale. In spite of his logic, which never ceased to play on his problem, he lent the colour of humanity to the All, making a finite mode figure impossibly as an infinite. It is this dividedness of spirit that sets up the incurable inconsistency in Spinoza's philosophy. And as the spirit of reason, once sincerely invoked, works like a leaven whereso-ever it is placed, the practical outcome is that Spinoza's system makes for naturalism, and not for theism.

We can see the solvent process going on in his letters. Writing to his friend Lewis Meyer[1] in 1663—the year of his Cartesian demonstration and his

[1] Epist. xxix (xii).

Cogitata Metaphysica—he argues that infinite substance "is not manifold, but single: there cannot be two of the same nature." In 1666, too, he ends a long argument[1] with: "Therefore there follows only the existence of a single God, which was to be proved"; and in a second letter[2] to the same correspondent he sums up: "I affirm that there can be only a single Being, of which the existence belongs to its nature: such a Being which possesses in itself all perfections I will call God." In 1674, some two years before his death, he writes[3] to his Memnonite friend, Jarig Jellis, that "since the existence of God is His essence, and of His essence we can form no general idea, it is certain that he who calls God one or single has no true idea of God, and speaks of Him very improperly." That trenchant proposition, cancelling the other, makes an end of all the anthropomorphism in the *Ethics*. And as the play of thought which led to that proposition is always going on in the treatise, it cannot be but that men will ultimately pronounce the negative conclusion to be the upshot of the whole. As Martineau justly sums up, "Spinozism is atheistic, and has no valid excuse for retaining the word 'God.'"[4]

To a modern reader's eye, there is so much in the *Ethics* affirmative of God, and of love to God, that this verdict might seem to be unwarrantable. From the first, such an account, in various phrasings, was given of the book by infuriated theists, as the worst of all possible charges, and by Spinoza it was indignantly denied. But when his cosmic theory and the

[1] Epist. xxxix, to Huyghens. [2] Epist. xl. [3] Epist. l.

[4] *Study of Spinoza*, p. 349. Jacobi similarly wrote, in 1785, that *Spinozismus ist Atheismus*, this while admitting its logicality, and admiring Spinoza.

scope of his ethic are fully realised, the charge is seen to be perfectly true. That Spinoza should not have seen as much—that he should have confidently and conscientiously repudiated the opinion that God and Nature are one[1]—is to be set down, on the one hand, as we have seen, to his emotional bias, and, on the other, to what we may term the Dominion of the Myth. Men had so long and spontaneously animised Nature (as some of us even now tend to do, the moment we write the word with a capital N) that the strongest brains of the seventeenth century do not seem even to have contemplated the thought that *any* personification of Infinity must be futile. They would say like their predecessors—Descartes and Spinoza both said it—that God transcended knowledge; but they never scrupled to give the unknown infinity "mind," thus making God so far in their own image as truly as did the first men. In the year in which he made the before-cited avowal to Jarig Jellis, as to the non-unity of God, Spinoza declared to another correspondent[2] that he had as clear an *idea* of God as of a triangle, though not as clear an *image*—a distinction with only a modal difference. To have as clear an idea of an alleged infinite as of a very simple finite is as impossible for a Spinoza as for anyone else. The very claim must be pronounced an aberration from reason. "We are not able to imagine God," the philosopher goes on, "though we can understand Him. You must, however, here observe that I do not assert that I thoroughly know God, but that I understand some of His attributes, not all nor the greater part, and it is evident that my ignorance

[1] Epist. xxi (lxxiii).
[2] Epist. lx (lvi). Cp. Spinoza's marginal note to cap. vi of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus.*

of very many does not hinder the knowledge I have of some." The collapse is complete, as regards any doctrine of infinite moral attributes. Yet in the *Ethics* such attributes are explicitly reaffirmed. And as Descartes and Spinoza were two of the most innovating intellects of their time, we must needs recognise in the matter a psychological proclivity, such as still exists for the average brain.

When all is said, Spinoza's loved and self-loving God *is* just the universe, considered as animated by mind—the pantheistic idea of antiquity, with the terminology of Hebrew and Christian philosophy imposed upon it. To those who have lost or escaped the proclivity, it is extremely hard to conceive how anybody should go about to love the universe; and there is reason to surmise that Spinoza really lived a twofold mental life;[1] thinking of his God in one stratum of psychosis as a Person, extremely wise, good, and passionless; but at other times, especially when reasoning with precision for didactic purposes, realising that infinite personality is a chimera. Hegel, meeting the complaint that Spinozism is atheistic, commented, "say rather acosmic"—meaning that Spinoza obliterated the Cosmos in God. But Hegel lived in words, and could always pay himself with them; as could Novalis, who pronounced Spinoza a "God-intoxicated man." That is the language of verbal possession; and it sets up sheer illusion about Spinoza. An Infinite Creator, he saw, could not

[1] I do not at all mean what has been put by Karl Thomas in his *Herbart—Spinoza—Kant*, that Spinoza deliberately combined what he knew to be two irreconcilable conceptions. Rather one might say with Dr. Martineau that Spinoza "may have loved to linger in a mystical penumbra of his early faith, even when the Sun of Israel had become eclipsed" (*Study of Spinoza*, p. 349). But I desire to suggest rather a divided consciousness than a divided will.

hate, could not condemn his creatures; and though he talked of God's "infinite intellectual love" towards God's self, the phrase is hollow; love must be cancelled along with hate; leaving nothing finitely thinkable but extension and succession. It is hard to say on this view whether Spinoza's mathematical method, so often lightly condemned, was an advantage or a drawback. A more organic way of reasoning, a larger pressure of the whole mind and sense on the subject, might seem likely to force a perception of the virtual meaninglessness of a Pan-Theos who neither loved nor hated, being simply the *substantia* of all phenomena; but then without the safeguard of a mathematical method, would Spinoza, emotionally hypnotised by the Myth, ever have reached his philosophy at all? I suspect that he could not.

III.

However that may be, his work consists in annulling, by an indirect action, the reign of the Myth; and in directly controverting the ethic appertaining to it. From him on the Continent, as from Hobbes in England, dates the philosophic as distinct from the theological doctrine of Determinism, in opposition to that of Free Will. The Predestination doctrine of Luther and Calvin was fundamentally anti-ethical, and can never have had a good moral influence, though, like other theological chimeras, it has not done the harm it might theoretically have been expected to do. Theologians, however, who bear themselves reverently to either Luther or Calvin, or to both, resort freely as against Spinoza to the method of the man in the street, who quite spontaneously and sincerely protests that "if you take away Free Will, there is no responsibility." When he is answered,

"No, not to a Creator," he is apt to satisfy himself by shouting "atheist" in the ancient manner, leaving the philosophic problem as it was. Spinoza gave such an answer to his unpleasant correspondent Blyenbergh: "Only in speaking improperly, or humanly, can we say that we sin against God, as in the expression that men offend God."[1] "Neither the honest man nor the thief can cause God any pleasure or displeasure."[2] The proposition could hardly carry light to any man remaining at the theistic standpoint; and might perhaps have been more effectually put for theological purposes, to the end of dismissing hell. But for all who do follow his philosophic reasoning, Spinoza once for all makes an end of the nightmare of an Infinite Person in a state of wrath against human perversity. And for those who are willing to face the problem of will and responsibility without falling back on theological assumptions, Spinoza cut the knot of their primary perplexity once for all by his sentence to Schaller:[3] "Bad men are not less to be feared, and not less injurious, when they are bad by necessity"—that is, human relations are practically the same on either theory.

But inasmuch as Spinoza has got rid of the notion of sin against deity, he has prepared for the greatest of all changes in human relations. What he was really proving when he said so often that evil is *non-ens*, "not positive," was that it is *non-absolute*, non-significant for the purposes of a cosmic theory. As between man and man, and in terms of human suffering, moral and physical evil are just as "positive" as moral and physical good. But there emerges the great and beneficent truth that the moral evil, even as

[1] Epist. xxxii (xix). [2] *Id.* xxxvi (xxiii). [3] *Id.* lxii (lviii).

the physical, is part of the "order" of Nature; and that the moralist must cease to colour his natural repugnance to it by pretending that he must hate it because deity does. That temper, however conformable it may be to polemic purposes, ancient or modern, is the mere negation of science. And it is to moral science that Spinoza leaves us in delivering us from the theistic nightmare. Recognised wrong remains repulsive to the moral sense, as slime or hot iron to the hand; but the enlightened moral sense is left to consider the phenomena without hate, in the one case as in the other.

In the *Ethica*, at times, the consequences of this principle are put in a fashion that may to some be disconcerting. This, for instance, may seem a hard saying:—

> Pity is suffering, and therefore in itself bad. The good which follows from it—that we strive to free from misery the man whom we pity—we desire to do at the mere dictation of reason; nor are we able save at the dictation of reason to do aught which we certainly know to be good; and therefore in a man who lives under the guidance of reason, pity in itself is an ill, and useless.[1]

It may seem, even when the force of the reasoning is perceived, that the argument is idle, inasmuch as no man can conceivably be led by reason to relieve suffering unless he feels pity for it; pity being a side of sympathy, which is the emotional basis of all moral action. But the thesis is not supererogatory. It is on the one hand part of the exposition of the relativity of evil, and on the other hand a corrective of the false ethic which sees a good in evil because it may inspire sympathy and beneficence. The end of

[1] *Ethica*, Pars iv, Prop. l, Demonst.

the whole matter is thus memorably put in the Note which follows the foregoing "demonstration":—

> He who rightly knows that all things follow from a necessity of the divine nature, and happen according to the eternal laws and rules of nature—he will verily find nothing worthy of hatred, derision, or contempt; neither will he compassionate any; but, so far as human virtue can go, will strive, as they say, to do well and rejoice. To this it may be added that he who is easily touched by compassion, and is moved by another's misery or tears, often does that which he afterwards regrets, on the one hand because we do nothing out of emotion which we can be sure is good, on the other hand because we are easily deceived by false tears. This I say expressly concerning the man who *lives* under the guidance of reason. For he who neither by reason nor by pity is moved to help others is rightly called inhuman. For he seems to be different from a man.

Here I can conceive the retort being made that to be so concerned for joy as to desire to excise pity from one's heart while leaving the reason free to do pity's work is to misread the lesson of life; that hate and derision and contempt are "pains" which worsen us; and that pity is one which betters. In truth, the ideal is impossible. But the theoretic truth was worth telling; and he who tells it was one who could not reck his own rede. He must have been pitiful, even as he was at times wroth. Again and again the marble text of the *Ethica* seems to glow with indignation: he who barred hate and derision and contempt could not refrain from the two last. Such insensibility would indeed have been incompatible with the genius of moral criticism, or at least with that repugnance to cruelty and intolerance which was needed to inspire the writing of Spinoza's book. One of his most characteristic doctrines, the denial of the actuality of Will save as mere Determination or Judgment, seems to have been attained and stressed

by him in express protest against the theological habit of assuming that all unbelief is a result of corruption of the Will. On this score he repudiated Bacon's dictum that a tincture of Will tends to vitiate all judgments. As a matter of fact Bacon was using the word "will" in the sense of wilfulness, or obstinacy in bias; and was thus pointing rightly enough to the psychological fact that most judgments are expressions of a prejudice, whether inherited or developed as mere attachment to one's own hypothesis. When Spinoza himself remarks how people in their "inveterate prejudice" will put aside all anomalous facts irreconcilable with their theories, and remain in their "present and innate state of ignorance" rather than pull down their system and think afresh,[1] he is specifying just such an emotional resistance to new truth as Bacon had in view; and to point to this as "Will" is a sufficiently practical way of warning men against it. The true answer of the freethinker to the charge of corrupt Will, in short, is that the corruption generally lies with the believer. But there is no mistaking the essential benevolence of Spinoza's doctrine, though he necessarily allows himself to charge prejudice as well as ignorance upon the enemy. And, once more, the clear upshot of his ethic, which is pure Determinism, is that it removes the *a priori* religious pretext for cruelty, and puts men upon the *a posteriori* study that proves cruelty to be as irrational for the intelligence as it is repulsive to the refined feelings.

It is a slow process, this de-animalising of man; and Spinoza himself was still at the stage of endorsing the custom of strangling men who had been

[1] *Ethica*, I, App.

bitten by a mad dog.[1] But he put in the blood and brain of the more enlightened of his age the vital germs of all humane and scientific thought. It is not generally recognised how wide was the contagion. As his *Ethica* remained untranslated in English down till the last generation, and the 1689 translation of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* was not reprinted, he seemed to be "only a name" for the average reader. But already at the end of the seventeenth century his philosophy had been in large part assimilated by Shaftesbury (though it was not safe for him to acknowledge it) in the *Inquiry concerning Virtue and Merit;* and in that and the later treatises which make up the *Characteristics,* Shaftesbury widely affected for good the ethical thought of the cultured class throughout northern Europe. It is through him, with Bolingbroke for unconfessed mediator, that Spinozism enters into Pope's *Essay on Man,* which in its insincere and inconsistent way puts in circulation glimpses of a philosophy beyond Pope's organic grasp. And there is plenty of evidence that Spinoza was read by many of the English Deists and men of science. It was in the first half of the nineteenth century, the age of reaction, that he passed out of sight for a time; but Arnold's non-committal essay marks the beginning of a new period of appreciation.

IV.

How far Spinoza was helped to his virtual Naturalism by the new science of his age, it is hard to say. He liked to use the microscope; but then so did many theists who drew from it only a confirmation for that fallacy of final causes which Spinoza set aside. And

[1] Epist. xxiv, to Oldenberg.

though he finally pronounced the physical theory of Descartes useless and absurd,[1] he did no such service to science as Descartes rendered. Compared with Newton, indeed, he is for ultimate purposes more scientific than the man of science. But his secret lay not in any strictly scientific turn so much as in his essential intellectuality, and his steady loyalty to all the truth he could see. His *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* may be reckoned a halting work, on the theological side, if read only with the modern consciousness; but we must read it in comparison with the few preceding books (such as those of Hobbes and Peyrère) which in any degree applied rational critical methods to the Bible. Thus considered, it is a great effort of original judgment; and it makes him, as Strauss recognised, the father of modern Biblical criticism as well as of modern Monism. He went at one stride, in virtue of his deep sincerity, further than professional criticism has gone till our own day; inasmuch as he definitely laid it down at the outset that whatever is true in the Bible is true "naturally" and not supernaturally. The exposition, indeed, proceeds in a fashion which testifies either to surprising vacillations on the writer's own part or to a sense of much need for alternating orthodoxies and heterodoxies. In the preface we are told that the writer has assured himself by study of the Scripture that it "leaves the reason absolutely free, and has nothing in common with philosophy, but each one sustains itself by the means proper to it"; and again that "the object of revealed knowledge is nothing but obedience; and therefore alike in object, bases, and means, it is wholly distinct from and has

[1] Epist. lxx (lxxxi).

nothing in common with natural knowledge, each having its own province, separate from the other, and neither being the other's handmaid." All this reads like the old scholastic doctrine of twofold truth, which had done so much service in glossing the rationalism of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. But on the first page of the first chapter we read that "prophecy or revelation is sure knowledge of anything, revealed by God to man," and at the same time that *ex definitione* "natural knowledge may be termed prophecy," and that "it has equal right with any other whatsoever to be called divine, since it is dictated to us by God's nature in so far as we share it and by God's decrees. .....As regards the certainty, which natural knowledge involves, and the source (to wit, God) from which it is derived, it yields in no way to prophetic knowledge." Here we have not only flat contradiction of the preface but flat blasphemy.

And the alternation goes on. We are told that "whatever we clearly and distinctly understand is, as I have just shown, dictated to us by the idea and nature of God; not, indeed, through words, but in a far more excellent way, which agrees best with the nature of the mind." Yet "nothing hinders that God should communicate to men *in other ways* that which we know by the light of nature." One asks first, Why should he? and next, If all ways be God's ways, where is the distinction? In the next paragraph we read that "we have nowadays no prophets that I know of," and that accordingly we must go back to the old ones. Yet we receive instantly the broad hint that "the Jews never speak of secondary or particular causes, nor heed them, but by reason of religion and piety, or (as it is commonly put) out of devotion, refer everything to God. If, for instance,

they gain money in trade, they say it is a gift from God himself.....if they think anything, they say God told it them." That is, the Jews do unphilosophically what Spinoza does philosophically: in other words, they represent all natural processes as supernatural. *Ergo*—so must many a reader go on—their prophets were simply preachers!

After an interlude of less unsettling disquisition on certain texts we read again that for the Jews as for the Greeks all storms and winds were God-produced; all great mountains and great trees were "God's"; a deep sleep was "the sleep of God"; and so on; and in like manner "miracles" were called God's works, "though of course all natural events are the works of God, and happen solely by divine power." It would be difficult to make a plainer indirect denial of supernaturalism than is thus put forth in many passages; and the writer could not have failed to foresee the outcry he would cause. He says as much, after declaring[1] that he will show, "as the times, philosophy, and the thing itself require," the error of supposing that the knowledge either of natural or spiritual things can be investigated through the prophetic books; and he protests that he cares little for the machinations of superstition, "which hates nothing more than those who cultivate true knowledge and true life." *Proh dolor!* he adds; "it has come to this: those who openly confess that they have no idea of God, and that they know God only through created things, the causes of which they know not, do not blush to accuse philosophers of atheism."

It is not surprising that they continued to do so after reading the *Tractatus*. No serious book nearly

[1] Cap. ii, *ad init.*

so outspoken in regard to religious unreason had ever been openly printed. Doubtless such things had been privately said. There is plenty of evidence as to the unpublished English and French unbelief in the sixteenth century and the first quarter of the seventeenth; and the *Leviathan* of Hobbes presumed much on the latitude of private discussion attained at the time of its appearance; but though Hobbes had undoubtedly stimulated Spinoza to utterance, he far outgoes Hobbes in the number of his contraventions of orthodox opinion, as well as in the extent to which he probes the authorship of the Pentateuch. Like the rationalising deists of the next generation, he is at times very naïf in his handling of tales of prodigies, as when he suggests that Joshua may have been led to speak of the sun standing still by a lengthening of the daylight through refraction from the snow in the air. Often his credulities are as surprising as his scepticisms. It is always so with pioneer work, for those who look back upon it. But when we take the book as a whole, and remember the intellectual climate and circumstances in which it appeared, we can but say with Flaubert: "What a man! What a brain! What science and what intellect!"[1] Only by being written in Latin could such a book attain publication even in republican Holland; and as it was, the second edition (1673) had to be published under various completely misleading titles, one of which was *Danielis Heinsii Operum Historicorum Collectio Prima.* In another case it figured as a work of medicine. When it was proposed to translate it

[1] "Je connaissais *l'Éthique* de Spinoza, mais pas du tout le *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, lequel m'épate, m'éblouit, me transporte d'admiration. Nom de Dieu! quel homme! quel cerveau! quelle science et quel esprit! Il était plus fort que M. Caro, décidément."—Flaubert, *Lettres à George Sand*, p. 110.

into Dutch, Spinoza at once protested,[1] knowing that the result would be its prosecution and suppression. Yet the single fact that on the strength of this book he was offered a professorship at Heidelberg testifies to the amount of freethought already germinating in Europe. The rationalism of the eighteenth century was well prepared for in the seventeenth. The very sale of such books as Spinoza's meant a far-scattered, silent public of thinking men, weary of a brutal orthodoxy and eagerly receptive of the most advanced thought that the clearest brains could produce. His true countrymen, accordingly, greeted him in all lands.

It is clear that, whatever he may have gained in accuracy and breadth of thought from what he knew of physical science, Spinoza grew more and more inclined to the modern scientific view of things in the later years of his life. "The authority of Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates," he writes in 1674 to a correspondent who believed in ghosts,[2]

> does not carry much weight with me. I should have wondered if you had been able to adduce Democritus, Lucretius, or any of the atomists or defenders of atoms. It is no wonder that those who discuss occult qualities, intentional species, substantial forms, and a thousand other trifles, should have excogitated spectres and ghosts, and believed old wives' tales, that they might throw off the authority of Democritus, of whose good fame they were so jealous that they burned all the books by writing which he had won such praise. If you are disposed to put faith in these, what reason have you for denying the miracles of the Holy Virgin and all the saints, which have been recorded by so many famous philosophers, theologians, and historians, that I could produce a hundred of these against barely one of those?

Doubtless his thinking grew ever more circumspect.

[1] Epist. xlvii (xliv). [2] *Id.* lx (lvi).

All that we have of his was written before he was forty: it is in fact a young man's work, as scholarly work goes. He was indeed a man of singularly broad and balanced culture. Speaking Spanish as his mother tongue, and reading that at all times for his pleasure, he was also from his youth up an accurate and competent Hebraist. In addition he so mastered Latin as to make it an adequate instrument for his philosophy; and, speaking Dutch in daily intercourse, he could write it better than most men ever do a foreign tongue. Withal, he loved art; and made himself, we are told, a very good amateur draughtsman in black-and-white. And nearly all the while he ground lenses for a living; and was a kindly and unassuming house-mate with ordinary church-going folk, who all loved him. One of his services to civilisation, the production of the *Tractatus Politicus,* his last work, has partly failed of fame because of the failure of its cause. Sympathetic with Hobbes in his rationalism, his pantheism, and his anti-ecclesiasticism, Spinoza remained to the last a good republican, enthusiastically loyal to the polity of the land of his adoption. When, after his visit to the French camp at Utrecht, some excited citizens talked of seizing him as a traitor, he was tranquilly ready to face the worst, having an entirely clear conscience. In the end, it was the people who were the traitors to the republic. The fall of De Witt cleared the way for the House of Orange; and the populace—partly because the middle-class republic was so imperfectly democratic; partly because itself had not the true democratic spirit—stood for the prince and against the commonwealth. But Spinoza's treatise remains to show that a greater than Hobbes, knowing all Hobbes had to say, could out-argue him for the faith

of democracy, while content to reason out also the best methods for monarchies and aristocracies. The problems of Spinoza's treatise are not our problems; but his handling of them is still instructive. When we find him pronouncing[1] that "the soil.....must be quite common property of the commonwealth"—a doctrine not indeed original to him, seeing that it was put forth by some of the Levellers in England under the Commonwealth—we realise once more how essentially modern was his whole movement of thought.[2] That Berkeley should be capable of classing such a man and such a thinker among "weak and wicked writers"; that for many years his name should be an "abomination,"[3] is a signal testimony to the power of religious emotion as a perverter of judgment and moral feeling. Larger and saner minds than Berkeley's, escaping that perversion, have rectified his preposterous judgment. For the young Goethe, the teaching and inspiration of Spinoza were of decisive importance; and it is essentially that teaching that reached Europe on the æsthetic side through *Faust*. Matthew Arnold, discussing the subject from his earlier Anglican point of view—a point of view the most pontifical, perhaps, outside of the Church of Rome—blandly concluded that Spinoza did really count to some extent for "edification"—Anglican edification. He was, in fact, from the early Arnoldian standpoint, a minor member of the worthy tribe of Bishop Wilson of Calcutta. But Arnold outlived his

[1] Ch. vii, § 19.

[2] Even when, on the last page of the unfinished treatise, he pronounces against the equal rights of women, he is modern in his raising of the question.

[3] "Spinoza tum vivus summa invidia atque odio jactatus fuit, nec in mortuo livor et superstitio pasci desiit. Ac multos per annos hujus viri nomen pro abominatione erat."—Gfrörer, preface to ed. of Spinoza's works, 1830.

Anglican infallibilism, though not his inherited pontifical gift; and there is reason to suspect that it was Spinoza who gave him the start on his path to the Naturalism which saw in the Christian God a "magnified, non-natural man," and was fain to reduce the God-idea to "Something-not-Ourselves," adding (as a sop to Cerberus) "which makes for righteousness" —the last film of the Myth, as it were.

Students who set out sooner than Arnold on the right path, and get further on the way, will make no ado about avowing that Spinoza counts for a great deal more than episcopal "edification," being in sooth a whole man, with a moral and mental experience which leaves the Anglican considerably in the rear. And the summing-up of Van Vloten, obliquely attacked by Arnold, remains perfectly true: the service of Spinoza to rational thought consists in the virtual disestablishment of the God-idea. Modern Monism is but the reduction of his terms to consistency. And while the act of reduction has been no light matter, involving nearly as much obloquy for the atheist in the nineteenth century as fell upon Spinoza's name and memory in the seventeenth and eighteenth, it is fitting that atheists should avow the line of evolution.

Charles Bradlaugh, I sometimes think, may have been drawn the more to Spinoza by the community at one point in their experience: each having been driven in youth from his father's house by the devilry of the ecclesiastical and religious spirit. Anyhow, it was by way of rectifying Spinozism[1] that Bradlaugh framed for himself his atheistic Monism. Bradlaugh came to his main conclusions about the age at which

[1] See Mrs. Bonner's *Charles Bradlaugh*, ii, 42.

Spinoza was excommunicated; and was in his turn duly excommunicated by the Christian spirit of his day and country. Spinoza now ranks as the one great Hebrew thinker; and Bradlaugh's view of his system has already become philosophic orthodoxy.

SHAFTESBURY

In his *Pensées Diverses,* Montesquieu has a surprising phrase, giving an obsolete view of more than one reputation. "The four great poets," it runs, are "Plato, Malebranche, Shaftesbury, Montaigne." Probably the idea came from Shaftesbury himself, who often discusses poetry as identical with good moral teaching. The author of the *Spirit of Laws,* on his part, was not exactly a connoisseur of poetry, for he is further committed to the view that "Pope alone has felt the greatness of Homer"; and in any case his praise of a thinker as a poet does not necessarily imply approval of his teaching, since he affirms in another page that Malebranche has fallen into a thousand sophisms through missing the principle of relativity. Since, however, he makes no such charge against Shaftesbury, he must be supposed in his regard to have intended high praise; and as a matter of fact his eulogy of the author of the *Characteristics* would be echoed, with whatever differences of phrase, by multitudes of instructed men in France, Germany, and England, at the time he wrote. As late as 1794 we have Herder praising our author as a "virtuoso of humanity," who had "signally influenced the best heads of the eighteenth century."[1] Such a reputation seems worth looking into.

[1] Cited by G. von Gizycki, *Die Philosophie Shaftesbury's,* 1876.

I.

Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury, was born in London on February 26th, 1671 (New Style). Connected by direct descent with the famous "Achithophel" of Dryden, who was his grandfather, he is associated in literary history no less closely with John Locke, who had been charged by the first earl to find a wife for his invalid son, and who acted thereafter as supervisor of the training of the seven children born of the marriage. Under Locke's eye and method Anthony, the first-born, was taught Greek and Latin, on the plan of conversation, by an accomplished woman, Elizabeth Birch, daughter of a schoolmaster. He had thus the rare fortune to be able to read both languages with ease at the age of eleven. Yet it was thought fit to send him to the Winchester public school at that age, presumably by way of toughening him for practical life. There has been preserved a letter[1] written by him to his father at the age of nineteen, in which, discussing the schooling of his younger brother, Maurice, he gives a startling account of the ways of the school. Of Maurice he declares that "the seven improving years of his life have been sacrificed at Winchester, and all given up for Latin and Greek, and he is so far from understanding them that he can neither make nor construe a sentence; besides that, in any other sort of reading he has no manner of tincture." "At Winchester," he adds, "I can tell your lordship it is only those that study and are diligent, and scarcely they, too, that escape that mother vice of drinking—the predominant

[1] First published in Dr. Rand's *Life, Unpublished Letters*, etc., *of Shaftesbury*, 1900, p. 281.

of the place." Professor Fowler, who had seen the letter in manuscript, came to the conclusion that "the English public-school education of those days probably left fewer traces of culture, and inspired boys less with the love of letters, than it does even in our own."[1] Shaftesbury, however, had been well grounded under Locke; and three years (1686–89) spent in foreign travel added a perfect mastery of French to his skill in the classics, and gave him a love of the arts which solaced him till his death. On his return to England he gave nearly five years to quiet study.

It was not, however, to letters but to politics that he gave himself when he felt he had intellectually come of age. In 1695 he entered Parliament as member for Poole; and in that year he—he and not the Earl of Halifax, of whom the story is sometimes told—made the often-cited stroke of advocacy for the Bill which provided that men indicted on charges of treason should be allowed the use of counsel. Finding himself at a loss for words, he had yet presence of mind enough to say: "If I, sir, who rise only to speak my opinion on the Bill now depending, am so confounded that I am unable to express the least of what I proposed to say, what must the condition of the man be who is pleading for his life without any assistance, and under apprehensions of being deprived of it?"[2] The Bill passed; but Shaftesbury did not often so conciliate the House. It was then in

[1] *Shaftesbury and Hutcheson*, 1882, pp. 6–7.

[2] Macaulay (ch. xxi) gives a much more elaborate version of the appeal. If it had been worded as he gives it, it would justify his suspicion that the whole episode was premeditated. But his version is plainly a composition of a later date. That in the text is the report authorised by Shaftesbury's son. See Dr. Rand's *Life, Unpublished Letters*, etc., *of Shaftesbury*, 1900, p. xxi.

one of its most factious periods; and Shaftesbury's hereditary Whiggism and personal independence were not to the taste of either side. In any case, his health soon worsened to a degree that forced him to give up his seat after the dissolution of 1698. His malady was Locke's—asthma, to which London smoke then, as later, was peculiarly deadly; and to relieve it he spent a year in Holland, returning to England at the end of 1699, when, on his father's death, he succeeded to the title. Macaulay, in his specific manner, asserts that after leaving the Commons Shaftesbury "gave himself up to mere intellectual luxury." As a matter of fact he exerted himself so greatly on the Whig side in the two elections of 1701 as to receive the special thanks of the king, with repeated offers of high office; and though he declined these, it was only the complete change of men and measures at the accession of Anne that drove him back into private life. Even thereafter, his letters show him constantly and deeply interested in current politics, though he became ere long a confirmed invalid.[1]

It was in this state of health that he at length addressed himself to deliberate authorship, and to no less deliberate marriage. He had desired that his brother should take upon him the latter duty, on behalf of the family and the title, and it was "after having waited seven years in hopes of my brother's marrying" that the invalid began to look for "such a wife as is suitable to me in my present circumstances of health and way of living." Those of his letters

[1] In June, 1703, he writes of "my health, which I have mightily impaired by my fatigues in the public affairs these last three years" (*Original Letters of Locke, Sidney, and Shaftesbury*, ed. by T. Forster, 1830, p. 198).

unwarrantably published by Toland show him desirous of marrying, in 1708, the daughter of a certain rich "old lord," who (the father, that is) would not take a favourable view of him or his suit, though he was willing to forego a dowry. One plan failing, he formed another, and in 1709 married Miss Jane Ewer, a distant family connection, with very little fortune. Ten years earlier he seems to have put aside the suggestion of Locke, that he should propose to a certain young lady with a fortune of £20,000. In private life he cared above all things for quiet happiness, and he seems to have found it, since he humorously testifies to his friend Molesworth that after marriage he finds himself "as happy a man now as ever." But the manner of the marriage is to the modern sense astonishing. We find him writing to his steward announcing his engagement, with the information that "the woman" is the youngest daughter in a family with which he used to be intimate, but had not seen anything of for eight or nine years. He had "determined on the youngest of the daughters," who had then been in the nursery; and whom at the time of writing he has not seen, and cannot even remember. "They are a healthy, sound breed," he writes; "and the youngest, they tell me, is the strongest constitution of all, well proportioned, and of a good make. No beauty. More I know not, as to her person, for I shall not see her myself till I have determined all else."[1] Philosophy has seldom been so practically applied. It is interesting to learn from another letter to the steward that, after having "seen the young lady," the wooer has warmed: "I protest that I think she is injured in having been represented

[1] Letter in Dr. Rand's *Life, Letters,* etc., pp. 403-4.

to me as *no beauty*.....For I think her a very great beauty." But he still stipulates that he is to be "married to a very young lady, not for love's sake (since I never saw her till the match was resolved on), nor for riches, but for my family's sake only and my ease in a private and country life."[1] The success of the marriage, one thinks, owed something to good fortune.

The few years of his life left to him were devoted to building up his literary reputation. In 1708 had been published his anonymous *Letter concerning Enthusiasm,* which had the distinction of speedily eliciting three angry replies, each bulkier than his pamphlet—one being twice its size. His only previous venture had been an edition in 1698 of some sermons of the Cambridge Latitudinarian, Dr. Whichcote, to which he put a laudatory preface. In 1699 Toland had published without his permission his remarkably precocious *Inquiry concerning Virtue or Merit,* in some respects his most weighty performance; but not till he had put his ethical doctrine afresh, with a lighter and more unsystematic touch, in his *Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour* and his *Moralists,*[2] both published in 1709, and produced his *Advice to an Author* (1710), did he proceed to publish the revised version of his early treatise with the others.

It was in 1711 that he put forth his collected essays as *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times,* including among them the *Inquiry*, and adding, as third volume, *Miscellaneous Reflections on the preceding Treatises, and other Critical Subjects.* It may

[1] *Id.* pp. 407-8.

[2] Originally entitled *The Sociable Enthusiast: A Philosophical Adventure, written to Palemon.* It seems to have been written in 1705. See Dr. Rand's note, p. 336.

be surmised that the *Moralists,* the *Wit and Humour,* and the *Advice to an Author,* or some of them, had been begun before 1708; and that his industry from that year onwards was motived partly by his success, partly by his consciousness of rapidly failing strength, and the need to husband time. Only two more years were left him. In July, 1711, he set out for the warmer clime of Italy; and there, at Naples, he died early in 1713, barely forty-two years old.[1] His last literary labours were the careful revision of his *Characteristics* and the writing of two essays in æsthetics, a *Letter on Design,* and a *Notion of the Historical Draught or Tablature of the Judgment of Hercules;* with some note-making for a general essay on the arts.

II.

Of this short literary career the success was rapid and far-reaching. It was hardly an exaggeration in 1733 to say, as did the preface to the pocket-edition of that year, that "all the best judges are agreed that we never had any work in the English language so beautiful, so delightful, and so instructive as these *Characteristics.*" On the title-page of a clerical *Cure of Deism,* published in 1736, Shaftesbury and Tindal figure as "the two Oracles of Deism"; and this was perhaps the high-water period of the deistic agitation. Nor was it only a popular acceptance that was thus indicated: the praise of Leibnitz had reached the Earl before his death; Hutcheson, the most considerable

[1] Various errors are current as to the above dates. I have been elsewhere misled by a standard authority which gives 1711 as the year of Shaftesbury's death; the editions of 1733 and 1737 (and presumably others) describe the *Miscellaneous Reflections* as having been first printed in 1714; Mr. Hatch's edition represents the whole collection as first appearing in 1713; and Dr. Gideon Spicker in his work on Shaftesbury dates it 1709.

philosopher between Berkeley and Hume, was his professed champion, and declared that his writings "will be esteemed while any reflection remains among men";[1] and Mandeville, Berkeley, and Butler testified to his importance in criticising him. Abroad his status was equally high. The *Letter concerning Enthusiasm* had been translated into French, and published at The Hague, in 1709; the *Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour,* issued in 1709, was translated into French before 1713; a German translation of the essays was begun in 1738; Diderot, then in his first deistic stage, issued his adaptation of the *Inquiry concerning Virtue or Merit* in 1745; Montesquieu panegyrised him as we have seen; a complete French translation of his works and Letters appeared at Geneva in 1769; and a complete German translation of the *Characteristics* in 1776–79. By that time, Shaftesbury's form of optimism had even carried the day in Germany over that of Leibnitz,[2] who had admitted its measure of congruity with his own; and there are clear traces of his influence in both the ethics and the æsthetics of Kant.[3] As regarded his general vogue, the facts that his philosophy was the basis of Bolingbroke's, and therefore of Pope's *Essay on Man,* and that at least eleven English editions of his book (the last appearing at Basel) had been produced by the year 1790, may be taken to signify that he held a classic standing before the beginning of the reaction

[1] Preface to the later editions of *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue.* The passage is not in the first edition (1725).

[2] Cp. Lange, *Geschichte des Materialismus,* 3te Aufl. i, 405. (Eng. trans. ii, 146, 147.) Lange traces the influence of Shaftesbury alike on French and German thought.

[3] Zart, *Einfluss der englischen Philosophen seit Bacon auf die deutsche Philosophie des 18ten Jahrhunderts,* 1881, pp. 219, 231. Kant, of course, never committed himself to optimism.

against the French Revolution, in which so many popularities were undone. The publication of Brown's *Essays on the Characteristics* in 1751 was a proof that forty years after publication they were reckoned dangerously influential; and the prompt production of three replies to Brown testified to the rightness of his estimate of Shaftesbury's vogue.

The decay of this reputation in the last century has been ascribed by one critic alternately to the unattractiveness of Shaftesbury's style and to the inconclusiveness of his thinking; as if profundity conferred popularity, or charm of style philosophic influence. Certainly the fashion of style has changed since Shaftesbury's passed as specially delightful. Its main defect is that which differences it so entirely from Montaigne's, its constant preoccupation with the labour of being at ease. Lamb has done it a certain injustice in calling it "inflated and finical," and in saying that "the peer seems to have written with his coronet on";[1] for though Shaftesbury seeks to "regulate his style or language by the standard of good company, and people of the better sort,"[2] he is really concerned less to be superior than to seem natural; and when he is fairly judged he must be admitted to have substantially reached his aim. Yet, withal, his very conception of the natural had a certain gentility; so that, though his prose is really not inferior to Addison's, with which it is so often contrasted by way of condemnation, it is inferior in both energy and ease not only to Dryden's, which lay to his hand as a model, but to that of Mandeville, which if less correct is more nervous and intimate. Addison is indeed more transparent, but only because he is so much shallower. Something

[1] Essay on *The Genteel Style in Writing.*
[2] *Advice to an Author,* part i, § 1.

depends on the depth of what a man has to say. What deprives Shaftesbury of litheness and vigour as a writer is his derivative ideal of propriety, which perhaps correlates with his invalidism ; though on the other hand it goes by the ruling standards of his age. A generation before, Dryden's own gift, no less than the heritage of spacious and imaginative prose which still remained to compensate Englishmen for the loss of great dramatic verse, had availed to reveal to him, after Rapin and Rymer had done their worst, the supremacy of Shakespeare and the doom of the classic French tragedy, as well as to preserve stride and stature in his own prose. But the *âme damnée* of James II, the Romanist pervert, and the venomous assailant of the first Shaftesbury, was nearly the last man to whom the accomplished and scholarly third Earl, Whig of the Whigs, was likely to look for either example or instruction.[1] In these matters Locke could not guide his pupil, and he formed his taste on the French critics of the periwig period, reading the classics partly through their spectacles.

Thus we find him praising the Elizabethans and Milton at most for their choice of blank verse and their ethical quality, finding Shakespeare devoid of grace, finish, polish, and ornament, but a good moral teacher so far as *Hamlet* went ; and Milton as an artist no better—this after poor John Dennis had shot his bolt on the right side, and just before Addison took up Milton's cause in the *Spectator*. Shaftesbury, again, had enough of the fine gentleman in him to make him concerned to tell his readers[2] that he allowed the printer to sell as many copies of the book as he

[1] See the long note in the *Miscellaneous Reflections*, Misc. v, ch. ii, where Dryden is not unskilfully pilloried for some of his petulances.

[2] *Advice to an Author*, part iii, § 2.

could for his own profit, the author taking no money;[1] and that his *Letter concerning Enthusiasm* was really a private letter, which got into print by accident.[2] The punctilio about money survived in the peerage till Byron's day, so that we must not charge it specially to Shaftesbury; but the whole attitude smacks more of Beau Brummel than of Montaigne. And with all his lordship's severity on his professional fellow-authors for "aiming at a false sublime, with crowded simile and mixed metaphor (the hobby-horse and rattle of the Muses)," he could proceed in the next breath after that very protest to speak of the Elizabethans as having "happily *broken the ice* for those who are to follow them: and who, *treading in their footsteps,* may at leisure *polish our language,* lead our ear to finer pleasure, and find out the true rhythmus and harmonious numbers which alone can satisfy a just judgment and Muse-like apprehension"[3]—one of the most comprehensive mixtures of metaphor on record, and a tolerable specimen of crowded simile, if not of the false sublime.

Some of his canons of style, further, were pettily pedantic, and pedantically held. In his own carefully corrected copy of the *Characteristics,* now in the British Museum, he notes that a friend has suggested the substitution of a "though" for a "notwithstanding" at a place where such a change would create a succession of ten monosyllables, "an offence," he declares, "which I am resolved never to commit." In another page, finding he has actually committed it, he deliberately creates a tautology by way of cure,

[1] Yet the printer sought to overreach him by using the cheapest ink and paper. Letters of 1712, in Dr. Rand's *Life, Letters,* etc., *of Shaftesbury,* 1900, pp. 464, 501.

[2] Misc. i, chs. ii, iii; Misc. iv, ch. i.

[3] *Advice to an Author* (ed. 1900 of the *Characteristics,* i. 142).

and the clause "for any one to take the chair who is not called to it" is made to run "neither called nor invited."[1] For once he seems to have been bowing to Dryden, who in the *Essay on Dramatic Poesy* derides a poetaster of his day as "creeping along with ten little words in every line." Dryden's judgment seems to have become canonical, since Pope in the *Essay on Criticism* repeats it:—

> And ten low words oft creep in one dull line.

But that Dryden had no notion of forbidding every succession of ten monosyllables either in prose or in verse is clear from his own practice in the same *Essay;* and, as everybody will remember, he begins his translation of the *Aeneid* with the ten monosyllables—

> Arms and the man I sing, who, forced by fate.

Evidently Shaftesbury had this very line in view[2] when he stressed Dryden's own rule, which he supposed to veto such a line. But Dryden had not so stultified himself. What he was condemning was the eking out of a verse with weak redundant particles, as "for," "to," "unto," to the entire loss of sonority and strength; and Pope had in view the same kind of thing. Categorically obeyed, the veto accepted by Shaftesbury would have quashed Shakespeare's

> We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep;

[1] *Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour* (ed. 1900 of the *Characteristics,* i, 53). Similar alterations have been made in other passages; and the diction throughout has been minutely revised, generally for the better. The style in the first edition has been somewhat negligent.

[2] See the *Miscellaneous Reflections,* Misc. v, ch. i (ed. 1900, ii, 322).

and Tennyson's

> Break, break, break
> On thy cold gray stones, O sea!

and

> When the dumb hour, clothed in black,
> Brings the dreams about my bed.

It is not thus that the great masters of speech are ruled;[1] and Shaftesbury's acceptance of such an arbitrary bondage in style, while standing for "free thought" in all things, must be granted to take him out of the magistral rank. At times, as in the *Miscellaneous Reflections*, he is even dilettantist enough in his manner and matter to justify Dr. Fowler's complaint that his tone becomes "falsetto."

All this, however, proves only that Shaftesbury is not a great or an impeccable artist; it does not amount to destroying his credit as a good writer. Before he was classed as a deist, nobody seems to have denied that he wrote very well indeed. On the first appearance of the *Letter concerning Enthusiasm* it was credited to Swift by all his friends; and Swift himself, believing it to be by his accomplished friend Hunter, pronounced it "very well writ."[2] This praise it certainly deserves. Though Shaftesbury can at times sink below Addison—who, however, was capable of chronic bad grammar as well as of much slipshod—he is normally above him in point of sheer vivacity and intension, to say nothing of his intellectual impact on a reader's sense. Even as critics the two men are pretty much on a par, since Addison's admiration of Milton was mainly based on religious sentiment, and was freely extended to the impossible Blackmore. And though Shaftesbury's elegant manipulation of

[1] In Bacon's essay *Of Gardens* (par. 6) there is a sequence of twenty-four monosyllables.

[2] Forster's *Life of Swift*, p. 220.

his rapier often makes us wish for the clean cut and thrust of Hobbes's mightier blade, yet he can at times write, and that in criticism of Hobbes,[1] with a swift sureness and spontaneous power that the other could not excel, and that Addison could not approach.

It was not literary imperfection, then, that lost the *Characteristics* their one-time credit. Rather their very literary art may have counted somewhat to that effect, since the students to whom finally Shaftesbury's audience was restricted would be apt to be impatient with his gentlemanlike discursiveness and want of visible method, in contrast with the businesslike progression of Locke. Nor can it well have been the logical insufficiency of his philosophy that lost him his status as a serious classic in the sense in which Locke may be said to have kept his; for Locke is at least as pervious to criticism. The explanation, however, though different from those above considered, is perhaps fully as simple. In any case, it is properly to be reached by way of a view of his doctrine.

III.

The *Letter concerning Enthusiasm*, with which Shaftesbury began his few years of diligent authorship, gives clear clues to all the essentials of his thought, though it is properly a political pamphlet

[1] See the *Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour*, part iii, § 1, end. As regards the criticism there passed upon Hobbes, it should be remarked that he himself anticipates it in the admission (*Leviathan*, part i, ch. xiv) that religious fear "hath place in the nature of man before civil society"; and again (part ii, ch. xxx) in the insistence that men must know before law the obligation to keep faith. But Hobbes never properly colligated his principles, and he is substantially open to Shaftesbury's attack. Temple had already put the two sides of the case shrewdly enough in the phrase: "Nor do I know, if men are like sheep, why they need any government, or, if they are like wolves, how they can suffer it" (*Essay upon the Original and Nature of Government*, 1672; Works, ed. 1814, i, 9, 10).

aiming at influencing immediate action. As we have seen, he was a highly-principled Whig, and as such he disliked at once the fanaticism of "enthusiasm" and the fanaticism which would forcibly suppress it. In the case of the "French prophets," both forces were at work; and though he did not anticipate any serious convulsion from their clash, he saw in their emergence an excellent opportunity for inculcating a counsel of perfection—a counsel which, as it happened, he must first have given to himself before passing it on. For as urbane as he is—to use one of his favourite idioms—in his plea for good humour in all matters of religious discussion, it happens that he came to that view by way of self-discipline, having become aware in himself of "those defects of passion, those meannesses and imperfections which we acknowledge such in ourselves, which as good men we endeavour to be superior to, and which we find we every day conquer as we grow better." Serenity was the prescription of his early *Inquiry concerning Virtue;* but he had not always fulfilled his ideal. In the first of his *Letters to a Student,* under date February 24th, 1706–7, he is anything but good-humoured about the "enthusiasts" who, then as always, decried the "cold dead reasoning" which put them at a disadvantage; and on that score he warmly champions Locke, whom on other grounds he was later to criticise with surprising asperity. It was later in the same year that he wrote his plea for ridicule as the proper regimen for "enthusiasm," having in the interim doubtless found it the more comfortable frame of mind. As his Letter to Somers[1] avows, we are all capable of some sort of

[1] Dr. Rand points out (p. ix) that Shaftesbury presented every one of his works to Somers before publishing it; and prints five of the letters of presentation (pp. 336, 386, 394, 400, 420), all in themselves

"enthusiasm"; and as he elsewhere urges, the only safeguard against miscarriage is vigilant self-judgment. The very self-consciousness of the Letter might alone suggest the manner of its inception. It does not employ banter, but prescribes it: a man spontaneously given that way would have made the fun he recommended.

And that Shaftesbury went through a process of self-discipline in serenity as a part of his progress to (or in) a philosophy of optimism, may be gathered from one of his letters to his friend Molesworth, dated November 4th, 1708:—

> You may think me melancholy if you will. I own there was a time in public affairs when I really was; for, saving yourself, and perhaps one or two more (I speak the most), I had none that acted with me against the injustice and corruption of both parties: each of them inflamed against me, particularly one, because of my birth and principles; the other, because of my pretended apostasy, which was only adhering to those principles on which their party was founded.....But the days are long past since you and I were treated as Jacobites.

Yet even in the year in which he published his Letter on Enthusiasm and his Essay on Wit and Humour we find him writing to his student *protégé* with extraordinary heat against Lucian as "a wretch who was truly the most profane and impious";[1] a deliverance so surprising as to make us feel afresh that the critic's leaning to humorous methods was a rather artificially cultivated mood with him.

Having declared, however, for ridicule as the

characteristic literary productions, and all expressing the same high esteem, which Somers seems to have reciprocated. The dedications to him of Addison's *Spectator* and Swift's *Tale of a Tub* exhibit no less admiration for him than is expressed by Shaftesbury in the first section of the *Letter concerning Enthusiasm*.

[1] Letter of January 28th, 1708-9.

proper protection for the State and the spirit against fanaticism, he must needs argue, as a consistent optimist, that there was nothing to be feared from the resort to such an instrument. It could check folly, but it could not hurt truth. Thus his humane prescription led him subtly into a position not tenable without paralogism; and he duly paralogised, albeit pleasantly, even making Aristotle say, what Aristotle never said, that ridicule is the test of truth. No right-thinking person, Shaftesbury goes on, can endure ridicule of the truth. But the right-thinking person, who thus admittedly apprehends the truth without the help of ridicule, has nothing to do with the case; since the business in hand is to enlighten the wrong-thinking, the enthusiast who takes error for truth. And as this person errs about what is truth, he can obviously err about the rightness of ridicule; so that for him it is no test; while the other man, in the terms of the case, does not need this test in particular.

Forty years later, "Estimate" Brown took much time and space to put some such refutation of the false formula into which Shaftesbury unwittingly expanded his very sensible counsel to the politicians of his day. In the criticism, the practical good wrought by Shaftesbury's challenge receives small recognition. The trouble was that by Brown's time the test of ridicule had come to be rather freely applied in directions where others than enthusiasts were disturbed by it. Voltaire was now in session. Brown was probably wrong in arguing that the ridicule of Aristophanes contributed to the death of Socrates—a question still discussed—but he was, of course, safe in saying that any doctrine whatever may be ridiculed by a qualified opponent, and that the worse may so be made to appear the better reason.

Shaftesbury had, indeed, implied as much in the somewhat odd passage in which, while professing orthodoxy, he argued concerning the hostility of the Jews to Jesus that, "had they but taken the fancy to act such puppet-shows in his contempt as at this hour the Papists are acting in his honour," they "might possibly have done our religion more harm than by all their other ways of severity." Paul, he proceeded to say, had fared ill at urbane and critical Athens. Believing Christians might be excused for inferring that a man who wrote thus, and who had previously urged that no right-thinking person could enjoy "ridicule wrong placed," was not a believer.

As to this there has been some forensic dispute, though his express compliments to Christianity as a "witty and good-natured religion" have not as a rule given satisfaction to the serious. Of his way of life it is told by his son that, "whenever his health permitted, he was constant in attending the services of the Church of England, and received the Holy Communion regularly three or four times a year"; and in a letter to his brother[1] he blessed Providence for a church "where zeal was not frenzy and enthusiasm; .....religious discoveries not cant and unintelligible nonsense; but where a good and virtuous life..... joined with a religious performance of all sacred duties and a conformity with the established rites, was enough to answer the highest character of religion." As Professor Fowler says, "the language is not very fervid"; and one is moved to pronounce his lordship pious in a Pickwickian sense,[2] the more so when we have his own avowal as to the calculated

[1] Cited in his son's biographical sketch, and published in Dr. Rand's collection, p. xxvii.

[2] Compare the cautiously ironical passage in the *Miscellaneous Reflections,* Misc. v, ch. iii, with what follows.

way in which, after a youth of some outspokenness, he decided to alter his outward demeanour, without professing to have altered his opinions. In a letter to his brother,[1] Shaftesbury gives a striking account of a visit he had received from a set of charlatan "enthusiasts," whom he specifies as "my old acquaintance Chrysogenes and Chrysogeneia his accomplished spouse," and a woman in Quaker's dress who accompanied them. Telling how he did his best to receive their vaticinations with respectful religious comment, he mentions that he asked his friend "if he thought this discourse any way strange in me, or if he judged of me now at this time by my character of early days and in the heat of youth,[2] when he first knew me, though even then he knew very well the awful impression I had of a Deity. And here I appealed to him concerning my much altered character of late years, my greater deference to all things sacred, or that carried but the shadow of religion." It may be doubted whether such a declaration, could it have been read by Berkeley, would have induced him to withhold from its presumed application to Shaftesbury[3] his remark that "an infidel who sets up for the nicest honour shall, without the least grain of faith or religion, take any test, join in any act of worship, kneel, pray, receive the Sacrament, to serve an

[1] Under date January 19th, 1701–2, printed by Mr. Hatch, in his uncompleted edition of the *Characteristics*, App. II.

[2] Shaftesbury probably had leanings to deism early instilled into him by his grandfather, of whom is first told, by Toland, the familiar story of the statesman's saying that all wise men are of one religion, the nature of which wise men never tell. Toland (*Clidophorus*, ch. xiii) says he had the story from "a near relation to the old Lord Shaftesbury."

[3] Professor Fowler is satisfied that all the insinuations at the outset of the third Dialogue of *The Minute Philosopher* were directed against Shaftesbury. This is probable, but not certain on the face of the composition.

interest."[1] And yet, apart from the gratuitous implication of the last clause, Shaftesbury would in that case be doing only what Berkeley constantly and passionately called upon unbelievers to do. Again and again he urges on them the "usefulness" of Christianity, and the recklessness of any course which takes away existing moral motives and menaces. There is no reason to doubt that Shaftesbury in his conformities acted on some such principle of giving a good example to "the vulgar"; and yet Berkeley is only the more exasperated.

Between the two men there is perhaps little to choose on the point of principle, since Berkeley implicitly justifies the subordination of truth to supposed public utility;[2] and on the point of temper and bearing the advantage is almost wholly with Shaftesbury, who does seem to have attained a due philosophic tranquillity, where Berkeley grows more and more embittered during some thirty years of strife with the new ideas. What he thought of the philosophy of his friend Pope's *Essay on Man*, which is in large part pure Shaftesbury,[3] filtered through

[1] *Minute Philosopher,* Dial. iii, § 2.

[2] Cp. Dial. iii, end, and Dial. iv, § 4.

[3] This was noted by Voltaire (*Lettres sur les Anglais,* xxii); but even in Professor Ward's excellent edition of Pope the inspiration of the *Essay* is credited solely to Bolingbroke and Leibnitz, though Pope denied having ever read anything by Leibnitz, and Bolingbroke dismissed him with contempt, as chimerical and unintelligible (*Letter to Mr. Pope,* in volume with *Letter to Wyndham,* 1753, p. 476). Specific parallels between Shaftesbury and Pope are traced by Warton, *Essay on Pope,* 4th ed. ii, 64–66, 93–95, 97–98. But there are many others: compare, for instance, the thesis, "true self-love and social are the same," with the *Inquiry concerning Virtue,* bk. i, part ii, § 2; bk. ii, part ii, § i; the passage "Shall gravitation cease?" with Shaftesbury's "The central Powers.....must not be controlled to.....rescue from the precipice a puny animal" (*Moralists,* part i, § 3); and the passage—

> Opinion gilds with varying rays
> Those painted clouds that beautify our days,

Bolingbroke, is not recorded.[1] The first two epistles of the *Essay* appeared in 1732, the very year of the issue of the *Minute Philosopher;* and they brought upon Pope charges of pantheism and immorality. His rehabilitation at the hands of Warburton is a good illustration of the chances of opinion-making. Warburton, we are assured, on first reading the *Essay* declared that it taught rank atheism.[2] When the French academician Crousaz said the same thing, Warburton took Pope's side, declared that he spoke "truth uniformly throughout," and went about to prove as much in an elaborate commentary. Later, Pope told his champion that "to his knowledge the *Characteristics* had done more harm to revealed religion in England than all the works of infidelity put together";[3] and Warburton passed on to Brown the mission of confuting Shaftesbury. Finally, Pope, in reply to the complaint of the younger Racine that his *Essay* was Spinozistic and irreligious, wrote repudiating alike Spinoza and Leibnitz, and claiming to be on the side

with the engraving on the title-page of the later editions of the *Characteristics,* and its legend, *πάντα ὑπόληψις*—a thesis often returned to in the text. So general, indeed, is the parallel that we must suppose Bolingbroke's silence on the subject to be due to the sharp political opposition between him and Shaftesbury in the war period, and to Shaftesbury's unanswerable indictment of his career in the *Characteristics* (see the *Miscellaneous Reflections,* Misc. iii, ch. ii, and editor's note, ed. 1900, ii, 262).

[1] Warton (ii, 123, 124, 295) has an odd story, derived from Spence, to the effect that Berkeley persuaded Pope to omit from the *Essay* an address to Jesus Christ, on the score that "the Christian dispensation did not come within the compass of his plan"—the very circumstance, it might have been supposed, which to Berkeley would be most objectionable.

[2] Sir L. Stephen's *Pope,* p. 178; Warton, ii, 125, citing Bishop Law.

[3] *Chalmers' Biog. Dict.,* article on "Brown," cited by Professor Fowler. A similar assertion is made by the apologist Jeffery in the preface to his *Christianity the Perfection of all Religion,* 1728. On the other hand, M. Texte has pronounced that "the *Essay on Man* did more to spread English deism in France than all the works of Shaftesbury" (*Rousseau and the Cosmopolitan Spirit in English Literature,* Eng. trans. pp. 117–118). The honours seem to be even.

of Pascal and Fénelon.[1] Yet, even after Warburton demonstrated to him his orthodoxy, he had written his "Universal Prayer," which passed current as "The Deist's Prayer"; and it had contained at first a stanza asking whether any act could "offend great Nature's God which Nature's self inspires?" Compared with the prudent poet, the most untruthful man of his age, and the accommodating if blusterous bishop, the author of the *Characteristics,* whom they utilised and impeached, comes out fairly well for posterity, as a man and as a propagandist.

His course, however, involved distinct penalties. By putting forth an ethical philosophy which plainly impugned the reigning creed, and embroidering it with sarcasms against the priests thereof, he put himself in the position of owing his literary vogue to the vogue of heresy, and of losing it when that went out of fashion. To speak of him as unwarrantably indirect in his way of impugning the argument from miracles,[2] is to make unduly small account of the risks which in 1711 still attended any direct attack on the popular religion. Under the Blasphemy Law of 1697, the author of such an attack could be imprisoned; and in 1713 Anthony Collins actually found it expedient to fly to Holland during the storm aroused by his *Discourse of Freethinking.* Shaftesbury was quite direct enough to be instantly ranked with the unbelievers. He had indeed declared for a Church Establishment, on Harrington's ground that "'tis necessary a people should have a public leading in

[1] Warton, ii, 121. The letter is dated 1742. Pascal, it may be noted, is copied in the lines of the *Essay* describing man as the "glory, jest, and riddle of the world"; but he would certainly have repudiated it as a whole.

[2] So Professor Fowler, *Shaftesbury,* p. 121.

religion."[1] But Hobbes before him had failed to win by such a view any forgiveness for direct hostility to the intellectual claims of Churchmen; and Bolingbroke in the next generation was disowned by the Church he had politically championed, when, after his death, the views they knew him to hold on religion were by his directions put in print. It was a matter of ecclesiastical police. And as Shaftesbury and Bolingbroke among the older writers mainly represented the deistic position at the date of the French Revolution for English people of heterodox culture, they passed together from fashionable popularity to disgrace as soon as the upper classes realised that rationalism of every sort had begun to mean democracy. Shaftesbury in particular was notable as a rather pronounced Whig, though he did speak of monarchy with much complaisance. The *Characteristics* accordingly have not been reprinted in full from that day to this.[2] The explanation is, broadly speaking, that when "free" views were again able to force a hearing, they were put by new writers in a current idiom, and in terms of the ideas accumulated during a hundred years of research. Relatively to modern philosophy, Shaftesbury is but a pioneer. But after two German monographs such as those of Spicker[3] and Gizycki[4] have been devoted to showing his importance in the line of progress of moral philosophy; and after two such culture-historians as Hettner and J. H. Fichte have pronounced him a most important writer, whom our century does ill to neglect—even if we smile at Dr. Spicker's unsmiling

[1] *Letter concerning Enthusiasm*, § 2.
[2] That is, till the issue of the edition to which this essay was prefixed.
[3] *Die Philosophie des Grafen Shaftesbury*, 1872.
[4] *Die Philosophie Shaftesbury's*, 1876.

reminder[1] that it needed the Germans to teach us to appreciate Shakespeare—it may be assumed that a knowledge of an English author of such repute will be generally admitted to be a part of a liberal English culture.

IV.

We come now to a study of Shaftesbury's philosophy without any preoccupying concern as to why it first succeeded and then failed. As exhibiting a way of thought which prevailed widely in Europe throughout the eighteenth century, and affected even the orthodox theology which repelled it, the ethical *Welt-Anschauung* of the once famous essays deserves undistracted attention. Put with much graceful reiteration throughout the *Characteristics*, it may be briefly stated thus ;—

1. Not only is the world providentially ruled by a Mind; but that rule is as absolutely beneficent as in the nature of things it can be. Nothing in the universe is "ill," relatively to the whole, and everything is as it must be.[2]

2. The ruling Mind may be alternately conceived as the Soul of the universe and as a personality external to the universe.[3] Disbelief in such a Mind need not necessarily do harm, but does no active good; right

[1] Work cited, p. 53. Dr. Spicker seems to be unaware that Mackintosh had about 1830 written of Shaftesbury in his *Dissertation on the Progress of Ethical Philosophy* as having been latterly unjustly and generally neglected; and had claimed for the *Inquiry* "a place in the first rank of English tracts on Moral Philosophy" (ed. 1872, pp. 89, 93).

[2] *Inquiry concerning Virtue*, bk. i, part i, § 2; part ii, § 1; part iii, § 3; *Moralists*, part i, §§ 2, 3; part ii, § 4; part iii, § 2; *Letter on Enthusiasm*, §§ 4, 5.

[3] Cp. *Moralists*, part iii, § 1; *Inquiry concerning Virtue*, bk. i, part iii, § 3.

belief can do much good, and wrong belief much harm.[1]

3. The ruling Mind being absolutely beneficent, Benevolence is the proper frame of mind in Man, who is so constituted as to find happiness in all his benevolent affections and in all beneficent action, and misery in the contrary.[2] Delight in evil does exist, but is "unnatural."[3]

4. This being so, all cajolery and all terrorism in religion are vicious and fallacious. God is to be loved without hope of reward or fear of punishment.[4] Immortality is likely enough; but future happiness is not to be held out as a bribe to right action when right action is in itself happiness; and future punishment is for the same reasons not to be held out as a menace, especially seeing that such considerations weaken the appeal of the natural moral interests, and that there is no virtue in doing right from fear. Yet the *strong* hope of future reward and *strong* fear of future punishment may lead men into habits out of which true virtue may grow; though a *weak* belief in a future state is again entirely injurious.[5]

5. While virtue is thus in every way natural to man, there is an art or refinement in that as in other expressions of natural preference. Perfect virtue, then, is perfected taste in morals. "All beauty is Truth"; "Beauty and Good are one and the same." Misconduct, accordingly, is bad taste in morals; and it is not surprising that ill-educated people err in

[1] *Inquiry*, bk. i, part iii.
[2] *Inquiry*, bk. i, part ii, § 2; *Moralists*, part ii, § 1; *Essay on Wit and Humour*, part iii, § 1.
[3] *Inquiry*, bk. ii, part ii, § 3.
[4] *Inquiry*, bk. i, part iii, § 3; *Moralists*, part ii, §3. *Letter on Enthusiasm*, § 5.
[5] *Inquiry*, bk. i, part iii, § 3; *Moralists*, part ii, § 3; *Essay on Wit and Humour*, part ii, §§ 3, 4.

ethics as in æsthetics. To be good-humoured and truly cultivated is to be right in religion and in conduct, and consequently happy. To be malevolent or maleficent, in the same way, is to be miserable.[1]

Merely to state these articles of philosophic faith in context, of course, is to show their inconsistency. But we shall best appreciate their influence by remembering that they share that defect with all philosophies which have ever been popular, and by reflecting that the defect followed inevitably on their purpose as a reform of religious theory from within. If we ask why Shaftesbury in effect affirmed that "whatever is is right," that the universe is beneficently controlled, and that man is naturally virtuous, while avowing that most things need rectifying, that the ruling Mind is normally misconceived by its creatures, and that bad taste in morals abounds, the first answer must be that Shaftesbury set out with some philosophic conclusions entailed on him by previous thought.

His critics and commentators in general have rather oddly overlooked the fact that his philosophy, as regards its bases, is drawn more or less directly from Spinoza. It is customary to point to *The Moralists* as the enunciation of his optimism that presumably influenced the *Théodicée* of Leibnitz, which appeared a year later; but the main positions of *The Moralists* are laid down in the *Inquiry concerning Virtue,* and the whole argument of that essay is contained in the version published by Toland in 1699,[2] the later alterations being in the main mere

[1] *Wit and Humour,* part iii, § 4; part iv, §§ 1, 2; *Advice to an Author,* part iv, § 3; *Moralists,* part iii, § 2.

[2] Archbishop King's Latin essay on the *Origin of Evil,* to which Zart thinks Leibnitz owed more than to Shaftesbury (*Einfluss der englischen Philosophen seit Bacon auf die deutsche Philosophie des 18ten Jahrh.,* 1881, pp. 15, 16), appeared in 1702. But see Leibnitz's own

improvements in style. This first edition, the fourth Earl tells us in his sketch of his father's life, was "taken from a rough draft, sketched when he was but twenty years of age."[1] Now, that Shaftesbury should at the age of twenty have produced from his own meditations a finished and formal philosophical treatise, of which the theses were capable of influencing European thought for a century, would be an extravagant assumption. It is morally certain that his main ideas were given him; and as a matter of fact they are nearly all explicit or implicit in Spinoza, of whose teaching Shaftesbury was sure to hear on his early visit to Holland in 1689,[2] if not otherwise. That there can be nothing essentially evil in the universe as a whole; that sin and evil are "not positive"; that men cannot properly be said to sin against God; that blessedness is not the reward of virtue but the state of virtue; that acts done from fear of punishment are not virtuous; that benevolence involves happiness; that things which are evil relatively to us are to be borne with tranquillity, since nothing in the universe can be otherwise than it is; that angry passions

Jugement sur les Œuvres de Mr. le Comte de Shaftesbury (in Des Maiseaux's *Recueil des diverses Pièces, par Mrs. Leibnitz, Clarke, Newton, etc.*, 2e édit. 1740, ii, 349), where he says of *The Moralists:* "J'y ai trouvé d'abord presque toute ma *Théodicée* (mais plus agréablement tournée) avant qu'elle eût vu le jour.....Il ne manque presque que mon *Harmonie préétablie*, mon *Banissement de la Mort*, et ma réduction de la Matière ou de la multitude aux *unités*, ou aux *substances simples.*" Leibnitz goes on to obscure the matter by saying: "Si j'avois vu cet Ouvrage avant la publication de ma *Théodicée*, j'en aurois profité comme il faut; et j'en aurois emprunté de grands passages."

[1] Fowler, *Shaftesbury and Hutcheson*, p. 15. It should be noted that the expression "rough draft" seems to be an exaggeration. The *Inquiry* as published in 1699 is a finished performance.

[2] As to this see his letters to his father in May and July, 1689, given in Dr. Rand's *Life, Unpublished Letters, and Philosophical Regimen of Shaftesbury*, 1900, pp. 280, 285. Cp. Fowler, *Shaftesbury and Hutcheson*, p. 13.

constitute a state of misery—all these doctrines are to be found in Spinoza's *Ethica* and *Tractatus Politicus*, or in his correspondence.[1] Some of them are also to be found, in less explicit form, in the *De Legibus Naturæ* of Cumberland (1672), who like Shaftesbury oppugned Hobbes; some (with other favourite ideas of Shaftesbury's such as that of the beauty of virtue) in the ethic of the ancients—Platonic, Stoic, Epicurean; some in Charron and Locke. With some of these debts Shaftesbury was reproached by clerical assailants; but not one of them, I think, noted that he echoes the Book of Proverbs (xi. 17), and none of them seems to have seen his relation to Spinoza, his chief forerunner.[2] It is finally regrettable that he himself should never have avowed his chief sources; but as regards Cumberland he may have been unaware of his coincidences; and as regards Spinoza he probably had cause to apprehend being specially attacked as atheistic if he professed any agreement with the great Jew, since his *Inquiry* seems to have been actually so stigmatised.[3]

The ethical ideas thus variously traceable Shaftesbury puts formally, but simply and lucidly, in the *Inquiry;* and in the *Moralists* he developes them with that urbane strategy of exposition which he regarded as best ensuring attention and comprehension on the

[1] Cp. the *Ethica*, part i, Prop. xvii, Coroll. and Schol.; Prop. xxxiii and Scholia; Prop. xxxvi and Appendix; part ii, Prop. xlix Schol.; part v, Prop. xlii. *Tractatus Politicus*, ii, § 8. Letters to Blyenbergh, Jan. and Feb. 1665 (Ep. 32, 34, 36, ed. Gfrörer).

[2] Some suggestions Shaftesbury may also have had from the *Enchiridion Ethicum* of Henry More, which he highly praises in one of his Letters to a Student (December 30, 1709); and it is to be noted that Hobbes himself, as against the passages (*e.g. Leviathan*, part i, ch. vi) in which he seems to make moral distinctions arbitrary, expressly states their natural basis in social utility (part. i. ch. xv. near end).

[3] See *The Moralists*, part ii. § 3.

part of those whom he wished to reach. And the central inconsistency as well as the practical insufficiency of the scheme as a whole inheres in the great structure of Spinoza as well as in the lighter framework set up by Shaftesbury and the flimsy erection of Pope. Needless to add, Spinoza in his beginnings proceeds partly on Descartes; and Descartes, in the very act of claiming to begin a philosophy without presuppositions, had presupposed the idea of God. Thus the whole series of efforts to deal philosophically with the problem of evil were but revisions of the immemorial theological effort, with the problem still conceived as theology had put it,[1] and as it was envisaged ages ago in the drama of Job and his cold comforters.

For us to-day the criticism of all alike is that the attempt to prove the essential rightness of an infinite universe as such is not so much fallacious as meaningless. As some of our discerning ancestors must have gathered from the battles of Irish bishops soon after Shaftesbury's day,[2] every expedition to reconcile

[1] The direct passage of the problem from theological hands to those of Spinoza can be readily seen from the *Disputatio de Malo* of Robert Baronius, § 5 of part i of his *Metaphysica Generalis*, described on its title-page as *ad usum theologiae accommodata* (Leyden, 1657). The proposition as to the nonentity of evil was also taken over by Spinoza from Descartes: see the *Principia philos. Cartes.*, Pars i, Prop. xv and Schol., and the *Cogitata Metaphysica*, Pars i, c. vi. Dr. Martineau, indeed (*Spinoza*, p. 56), finds that in this one case of the doctrine that evil is *non-ens* Spinoza may have been indebted to rabbinical philosophy—in particular to Maimonides. But for that matter the thesis is at least as old as Euclides of Megara, the disciple of Socrates (Diog. Laërt. c. x, § 2, (106). It was taken up by Gregory of Nyssa, who anticipated St. Augustine in using it against the Manicheans; and it reappears clearly in the Pseudo-Dionysius; again in John the Scot; and again, long afterwards, in Giordano Bruno.—Ueberweg, *Hist. of Philos.*, Eng. tr. i, 330, 343, 351; ii, 27; Poole, *Illustrations of the History of Mediæval Thought*, pp. 54, 61.

[2] See Sir Leslie Stephen's account of the feud of Bishops Browne and Berkeley, *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, i, 114–118. Archbishops King and Synge were implicated.

"divine goodness" with earthly evil ends in trouble, for it has to be finally admitted that infinite goodness cannot be as human goodness; that is to say, that infinite goodness has no meaning for men. Thus every optimistic philosophy ends in verbally explaining to an uncomprehended infinitude, in terms of finite thought, the necessity of its infinite perfection from its own point of view: a laudably disinterested undertaking, but one which men might profitably forego in the pursuit of their own concerns.

Theory apart, the undertaking has this special bane, that inasmuch as any moral doctrine, to be held intelligently, must needs be construed rather with than without a bearing on life, the optimistic view of evil is always tending to paralyse ethics. Normally, no doubt, the theorem that evil is *non-ens,* that whatever is is right, that wrong is so only relatively to the finite, is held as a philosophic verbalism, out of touch with conduct. In the hands of Pope the insincerity of it becomes preposterous. Spinoza and Shaftesbury, like their predecessors, affirm in one breath the universal harmony of things, and in the next denounce the discords. In recent times, Mr. Browning has with unique vivacity repeated their procedure, reminding us in one set of poems, in the ancient fashion, that we who see only a minute fraction of the scheme of things have no right to an opinion; and in others darkly explaining how Deity "unmakes but to remake" its moral misfits. "It's better being good than bad," sings the poet, face to face with evil; going on to inform us that his "own hope is, a sun will pierce the thickest cloud earth ever stretched," and that what God blessed once cannot prove accurst. On that airy footing, perhaps, little harm is done to anything but the logical sense. But whether or not

Mr. Browning ever made of his optimism a deafening medium between his sensibilities and

> the fierce confederate storm
> Of sorrow, barricadoed evermore
> Within the walls of cities,

there is always an even chance that the less sensitive will so employ the theorem.

In the case of Shaftesbury as in that of Pope, it is plain, the optimist and the moralist are always tending to neutralise each other. If partial ill be universal good, how shall the man who thinks so be zealous to alter any ill save, by reflex action, the pinching of his own shoe? If he be really concerned to mend human things, to what end does he insist that it is only from the ignorant human point of view that they need mending, and that a Benevolent First Cause has done all things well? For the mere comfort of resignation under ills that cannot be altered, such a moral price seems excessive, to say nothing of the philosophical vertigo involved. Haunted by the old dilemma, and hemmed in by the adversary, Mr. Gladstone in our own day took the prudent course of avowing that evil in general is a mystery, though like his teachers he could always salve any particular evil by the argument from finite ignorance. Two hundred years ago, in the first enchantment of naturalistic exploration, away from the theological close, the pioneering theists did not feel the need for reserves, else Shaftesbury and Pope had not had such an easy time of it in criticism.

We can but note, then, that Shaftesbury saddled his ethic with optimism on the pressure of his theistic presuppositions, and that he did his work winningly enough to satisfy the liberal majority for two or three generations. If he repelled Christians where Locke

sought to conciliate them, on the other hand he seemed to deists to give a new footing to theistic ethics by rejecting Locke's polemic against innate ideas as irrelevant,[1] inasmuch as moral ideas are none the less inevitably developed. It was his form of optimism, as we saw, that carried the day in the land of Leibnitz; he inspired the deism of France, through Diderot and Voltaire; and it may well have been by lineal literary descent from him that Browning drew his creed; for we find it accepted, apparently from the *Characteristics,* by Priestley,[2] who passed it on to the Unitarian Cogan[3] and to W. J. Fox, from whose preaching in South Place Chapel Browning would seem to have partly derived it.[4]

At the same time, the ethic of the *Characteristics,* considered apart from its theistic frame, was no less widely influential. The appearance of the book, says our historian of ethics, "marks a turning-point in the history of English ethical thought." "Shaftesbury is the first moralist who distinctly takes psychological experience as the basis of ethics. His suggestions were developed by Hutcheson into one of the most elaborate systems of moral philosophy which we possess; and through Hutcheson, if not directly, they indirectly influenced Hume's speculation.....Moreover, the substance of Shaftesbury's main arguments was adopted by Butler."[5] In this aspect, again, our author compels our critical attention.

[1] See the *Letters to a Student,* under date June 3, 1709.

[2] *Essay on the First Principles of Government,* 2nd ed. 1771, pp. 257–261.

[3] See *A Philosophical Treatise on the Passions,* by T. Cogan, M.D., 2nd ed. 1802.

[4] Cp. Dr. Conway's *Centenary History of the South Place Society,* 1894, pp. 80, 89.

[5] Sidgwick, *Outlines of the History of Ethics,* 3rd ed. p. 190.

V.

The gist of Shaftesbury's doctrine of morals, later systematised by Hutcheson, lies in his claim that it is self-evident "that in the very nature of things there must of necessity be the foundation of a wrong and a right taste, relish, or choice, as well in respect of inward characters and features as of outward person, behaviour, and action."[1] Its immediate controversial bearing lay in its relation to the ethics of Hobbes and Locke, of whom the former, though he did incidentally note clearly enough that moral law is an expression of a surmised social utility, was led by his reaction against rebellious fanaticism to place all moral authority in a political head; while the latter, rejecting political absolutism, placed the source of morals in the will or command of Deity. To force moral philosophy from these bases to that of human nature and rationally conceived utility was no small service; and this Shaftesbury virtually accomplished. Grotius indeed had before him affirmed that "the mother of natural law is human nature,"[2] but this only after positing the will of God, and revelation, as "origins of *Jus*."[3] Shaftesbury made no such compromise. The previous effort of Cumberland, again, who was in the main not only utilitarian but psychologically materialistic,[4] but who still made Deity a concurrent factor in morals, seems to have come to nothing, apparently for lack of adhesiveness of statement. His book, whether in the original Latin or in the English

[1] *Advice to an Author*, part iii, § 3; ed. 1900, i, 216, 217.
[2] *De Jure Belli et Pacis* (1625), Proleg. xvi.
[3] *Id.* xi–xiv. Cp. Fowler, *Shaftesbury and Hutcheson*, p. 165, as to the vogue of the orthodox view.
[4] See the account of his doctrine by Whewell, *Lectures on Moral Philosophy*, ed. 1862, pp. 75–83.

abridgment or complete translation, seems never to have been widely circulated; whereas Shaftesbury became instantly popular; and ever since his day, through the succession of Hutcheson, Butler, Hume, Smith, Bentham, Mill, and Spencer, the rationalistic view has held its ground in English thought. Even Brown's clerical criticism of the *Characteristics* expressly aimed at putting a thorough in place of an imperfect utilitarianism.

Imperfections apart, Shaftesbury's teaching broadly promoted rational morals, not only against the political and theological forms of dogmatism, but against the anarchism which they had generated. Locke's dogma that rightness and wrongness depend on God's will left small theistic standing-ground against his own demonstration that all moral ideas are acquired, and vary accordingly. As Hutcheson remarked, "Nothing is more ordinary among those who after Mr. Locke have shaken off the groundless opinions about innate ideas, than to allege that all our relish for beauty and order is either from advantage, or custom, or education;"[1] and the argument as to morals was on all fours. Mandeville made it classic; but Shaftesbury's remarks[2] show that it was popular before Mandeville published the prose commentary on his *Fable of the Bees*. Had Shaftesbury lived to read the latter writer he might have transferred to him the strictures which he passed on Locke, so much further did the fabulist carry the argument than the philosopher had done. Shaftesbury, however, would still have held, probably, that Locke had given away the case for

[1] *Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, 1st ed. pp. 73, 74.

[2] *Inquiry*, bk. ii, part ii, § 1; *Wit and Humour*, part ii, § 2; part iii, § 3; *Advice to an Author*, part iii, § 3.

ethics, as he understood it, to the enemy; and it was with that feeling strong upon him that he expressed himself concerning Locke's moral philosophy in two letters which have been preserved. The first is addressed to Michael Ainsworth, the youth whom he educated for the ministry, and to whom he sent a series of letters while Ainsworth was at the university. To the young student, Locke is thus arraigned:—

> In general, truly, it has happened that all those they call *free writers* nowadays have espoused these principles which Mr. Hobbes set a-foot in this last age. Mr. Locke, as much as I honour him on account of other writings (viz. on government, policy, trade, coin, education, toleration, etc.), and as well as I know him and can answer for his sincerity as a most zealous *Christian* and believer, did, however, go in the self-same track, and is followed by the Tindals and all the other ingenious free authors of our time.
>
> It was Mr. Locke that struck the home blow: for Mr. Hobbes's character and base slavish principles in government took off the poison of his philosophy. 'Twas Mr. Locke that struck at all fundamentals, threw all order and virtue out of the world, and made the very ideas of these (which are the same as those of God) *unnatural*, and without foundation in our minds. *Innate* is a word he poorly plays upon; the right word, though less used, is *con-natural*. For what has birth or progress of the fœtus out of the womb to do in this case? The question is not about the time the *ideas* entered, or the moment that one body comes out of the other, but whether the constitution of man be such that, being adult and grown up, at such or such a time, sooner or later (no matter when), the idea and sense of order, administration, and a God, will not infallibly inevitably necessarily spring up in him.
>
> Then comes the credulous Mr. Locke, with his Indian, barbarian stories of wild nations, that have no such idea, as travellers (learned authors! and men of truth! and great philosophers) have informed him, not considering that is but a negative upon a hearsay, and so circumstantiated that the

faith of the Indian denyer[1] may be as well questioned as the veracity or judgment of the relater; who cannot be supposed to know sufficiently the mysteries and secrets of these barbarians; whose language they imperfectly know; to whom we Christians have by our little mercy given sufficient reason to conceal many secrets from us, as we know particularly in respect of simples and vegetables, of which, though we got the Peruvian bark and some other noble remedies, yet it is certain that through the cruelty of the Spaniards, as they have owned themselves, many secrets in medicinal affairs have been suppressed.

But Mr. Locke, who had more faith, and was more learned, in modern wonder-writers than in ancient philosophy, gave up an argument for the Deity, which Cicero (though a professed sceptic) would not explode, and which even the chief of the atheistic philosophers anciently acknowledged, and solved only by their *primus in orbe deos fecit timor.*

Thus virtue, according to Mr. Locke, has no other measure, law, or rule, than fashion and custom: morality, justice, equity, depend only on law and will: and God indeed is a perfect free agent in his sense; that is, free to anything that is, however ill; for if he wills it, it will be made good; virtue may be vice, and vice virtue in its turn, if he pleases. And thus neither right nor wrong, virtue nor vice, are anything in themselves; nor is there any trace or idea of them naturally imprinted on human minds. Experience and our catechism teach us all! I suppose 'tis something of like kind which teaches birds [to build] their nests, and how to fly the minute they have full feathers.[2].....

In a letter[3] to his friend General (afterwards Earl) Stanhope, written a few months later, he passes a similar criticism:—

As for *innate principles* which you mention, it is, in my opinion, one of the childishest disputes that ever was. Well it is for our friend Mr. Locke, and other modern philosophers

[1] In Dr. Rand's transcript (p. 404) this is misprinted "danger," which destroys the meaning.

[2] *Letters of the Earl of Shaftesbury*, 1746, pp. 31–34. Letter of June 3, 1709.

[3] Published for the first time by Dr. Rand, p. 413 sq.

> of his sire, that they have so poor a spectre as the ghost of Aristotle to fight with. A ghost indeed! since it is not in reality the Stagyrite himself nor the original Peripatetic hypothesis, but the poor secondary tralatitious system of modern and barbarous schoolmen which is the subject of their continual triumph. Tom Hobbes, whom I must confess a genius, and even an original among these latter leaders in philosophy, had already gathered laurels enough, and at an easy rate, from this field.

After further criticisms, he goes on to say of Locke, truly enough, that in his successive editions "he made great alterations on these points where, though a *divine* may often waver, a *philosopher,* I think, never can." And he adds a summing-up:—

> Thus have I ventured to make you the greatest confidence in the world, which is that of my philosophy, even against my old tutor and governor, whose name is so established in the world, but with whom I concealed my differences as much as possible. For as ill a builder as he is, and as little able to treat the home-points of philosophy, he is of admirable use against the rubbish of the schools in which most of us have been bred up. But if, instead of the phantom he opposed and had always before his eyes, he had known but ever so little of antiquity, or been tolerably learned in the state of philosophy with the ancients, he had not heaped such loads of words upon us, and for want of a sound logic (in which he shows himself pretty diffident) imposed on himself at every turn by the sound of names and appellations, while he is continually giving the alarm, and cautioning others against the deceit.....

The whole criticism is just a little too much *de haut en bas,* a little too much in the vein of the earl disparaging his tutor; though in his letter to Le Clerc in 1705,[1] in which he gives such an interesting account of Locke's relations with his grandfather and father, he speaks of him as one "having the absolute direc-

[1] Printed in *Notes and Queries,* Feb. 8, 1851. Reprinted by Dr. Rand, p. 328 sq.

tion of my education, and to whom, next my immediate parents, as I must own the greatest obligation, so I have ever preserved the highest gratitude and duty." What is more serious is the hasty and heated misstatement of Locke's position. The whole criticism, with its unworthy aspersion of Hobbes, tells unduly of temper.

Insofar as he deals with the question of the alleged absence of religious beliefs among certain savages, Shaftesbury will to-day find considerable support.[1] Professor Max Müller and others have pressed his argument that the travellers who report a religious blank in a given tribe speak without proper means of knowledge. This is so obvious that it is idle to object, further than to note that a given savage may really be without religious beliefs though his entire tribe may not. But the issue does not turn on the existence or non-existence of "religious beliefs" among savages. The problem is twofold. 1. It is asserted that all men have an idea of God. 2. It is asserted that all men have moral perceptions. The answer is (1) that ideas as to supernatural powers vary so enormously that *ipso facto* they invalidate the proposition based on their existence. A million variant guesses tell only of a process of guessing; and the argument from universal consent is a bad sophism. Similarly (2) the occurrence of moral judgments among all men proves only that men are morally judging animals.

Shaftesbury was quite wrong in representing Locke as denying that men have moral proclivities, or "connatural" moral tendencies. Locke expressly wrote: "I deny not that there are natural tendencies imprinted

[1] The dispute has lasted long. See the present writer's *Short History of Freethought*, 1906, i, 30–31.

on the minds of men, and that from the very first instances of sense and perception there are some things that are grateful and others unwelcome to them; some things that they incline to and others that they fly; but this makes nothing for innate characters on the mind. Such natural impressions on the understanding are so far from being confirmed hereby, that this is an argument against them; since, if there were certain characters imprinted by nature on the understanding, as the principles of knowledge, we could not but perceive them constantly operate in us.....as we do those others on the will and appetite."[1] In merely claiming that men spontaneously frame moral judgments, Shaftesbury was missing the issue. Locke was facing the diversity of moral bias, in times, in nations, in persons—a phenomenon which Shaftesbury could no more explain from his standpoint than he could the existence of either reasoned or unreasoned atheism. His "infallibly, inevitably, necessarily" is simply not true. And though Locke does ineptly and theologically argue that the "true ground of morality.....can only be the will and law of a God, who sees men in the dark, has in his hand rewards and punishments, and power enough to call to account the proudest offender,"[2] he goes on inconsistently enough to say: "For God having, by an inseparable connection, joined virtue and public happiness together, and made the practice thereof necessary to the preservation of society, and visibly beneficial to all with whom the virtuous man has to do, it is no wonder that every one should not only allow, but recommend and magnify those rules to others, from whose observance

[1] *Of Human Understanding*, B. I, ch. iii, § 3.
[2] *Id. ib.* § 6.

of them he is sure to reap advantage to himself." The "inseparable connection" asserts all that Shaftesbury wants; and the "every one," which is a flat contradiction of the rest of the chapter, is an extravagance thoroughly in Shaftesbury's vein. The immediate difficulty is to decide which philosopher is the more inconsistent. Locke, however, partly saves his case by repeating that men's acknowledgment of given moral principles "proves not that they are innate principles," or even that the professors "assent to them inwardly in their own minds, as the inviolable rules of their own practice."

The residual truths are (1) that men's appetites and interests alike lead or seem to lead them to transgress what other men, and they themselves in the abstract, recognise to be "the" moral law; and (2) that "moral truths" are to be ascertained like scientific truths, "by the due use and application of our natural faculties"[1]—in other words, are grounds for speculation, miscalculation, guidance, and misguidance. Locke is substantially clearing the way for Mandeville, who, reiterating some of Locke's inconsistencies, pressed home his implicit thesis that self-interest, custom, and education do determine for all men what is right and wrong. Against that nihilistic line of attack Shaftesbury's defence would have been distinctly stronger if, instead of affirming the infinite rightness of things and loosely attaching to that concept the further formula that the infinite order is absolute beauty, to which it is our business to approximate, he had squarely put it that the relations involved in ethics *are* subjectively variable, like those involved in æsthetics. Moral opinions clearly enough root in

[1] Locke, as cited, § 13.

the nature of things; they therefore vary with all variations and developments in human relations. As Brown irreligiously put it, right or beautiful actions "have not any absolute and independent but a relative and reflected beauty."[1] And as Shaftesbury himself admitted a greater need for self-study and criticism in morals than in æsthetics, he should in just sequence have proceeded to teach that the right adjustment of human relations all round is a matter of endless and anxious calculation. This much he might have recognised even without the light of that concept of evolution which prepares us to find in man an endless diversity of adaptation to social conditions, from the best to the worst. What else was signified by his own motto of *πάντα ὑπόληψις*—"All is opinion"—"'Tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus"? As it was, he gave a standing-ground against moral anarchism; but his optimism put his adherents very much at their ease in Zion, and left not a little logical room for the play of the dogmatisms which avowedly recognised the difficulties he ignored. Life was too plainly a less simple matter than he made it out.

Two criticisms typify the resistance against which Shaftesbury failed to provide. Mandeville, in his grimly humorous way, pointed to the enormous force of egoism in human affairs, and in effect decided for the theoretic solution of Hobbes. Brown, while sharply repugning Mandeville, whose humour he appreciated as little as he did Shaftesbury's, dwelt equally with him on the stress of evil, and theologically insisted on the necessity of a hope of reward and fear of future punishment as a restraint on human action, declaring such a belief to be "the essence of

[1] *Essays on the "Characteristics,"* 1751, p. 136.

religion."[1] Such theological utilitarianism, dignified by Butler and confused by Paley, became the ruling English orthodoxy. The upshot was that while Shaftesbury was in favour with leisured and irresponsible men of rational culture, the semi-pessimism of the cynic and of the theologian held its ground with the majority—all the more easily because Shaftesbury himself allowed that "the mere vulgar of mankind often stand in need of such a rectifying object as the gallows before their eyes."[2] Between Mandevillism and the Church, despite the revulsion of many, there grew up a curious sympathy. It is indeed a mistake to take seriously, as does the late Dr. Fowler, the closing sentence of Mandeville's book, in which, with a sardonic humour all his own, he speaks of Shaftesbury as designing "to establish heathen virtue on the ruins of Christianity." There was certainly small serious concern for Christianity in the author of the *Fable of the Bees*. None the less there arose, as Henry Crabb Robinson wrote to Schlosser, a "sneaking kindness" towards Mandeville on the part of Churchmen,[3] who felt that if he did not believe in them he at least damaged their adversary, the optimistic pantheist.[4] The due subjection of "the vulgar," however, was sufficiently agreed upon all round, down

[1] *Essays* cited, p. 210.

[2] *Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour*, part iii, § 4, end.

[3] Schlosser, *History of the Eighteenth Century*, Eng. trans. ii, 51, note.

[4] Mandeville observed that no two systems could be more opposed than his and Shaftesbury's. Yet there is a point of concurrence, at which Shaftesbury's is left undeveloped. In general he argued for the pleasurableness of virtue, where Mandeville founded on the old Christian doctrine that there is no virtue without self-sacrifice. In the *Inquiry*, however, Shaftesbury expressly admits that there is more virtue in governing a bad disposition than in following a good one (*Inquiry*, bk. i, part ii, § 4). "There seems," he confesses, "to be some kind of difficulty in the case." There certainly is; and he has not overcome it.

till the last decade of the century, to make it possible for Shaftesburyan deists and pantheists to maintain themselves as good friends of the reigning order; and when that was suddenly and vehemently assailed they seem promptly to have joined the party of authority and repression.

VI.

When all is said, however, Shaftesbury is found to leave to our own age the legacy of a rarely tolerant judgment, a deeply rational bias, and many a shrewd hint towards the understanding of that social evolution which as a whole his formula of optimism glosed. He deserves, among other things, to rank as one of the very first of our sociologists; since ideas which afterwards seem fresh in Hume and Ferguson are to be found clearly enough set forth in his pages. Not only does he confute with masterly force the Hobbesian fallacy that a political compact first gives validity to moral obligations,[1] but he expresses in a singularly modern way the continuity and ubiquity of the associative principle in man, from the primordial herd onwards to societies within society.[2] While humorists and paradoxers of Mandeville's school were obscuring the truth by their exaggerations, witty or otherwise, he puts his finger accurately on the economic principle in religious evolution.[3] And though Mandeville on the whole did more for the analysis of contemporary social problems, he rendered no better social service than did Shaftesbury in the *Letter concerning Enthusiasm,* of which the paralogism did no harm, seeing that men always did and

[1] See the *Wit and Humour,* part iii, § 1; ed. 1900, i, 73, 74.
[2] *Id.* part iii, § 2.
[3] *Miscellaneous Reflections,* Misc. ii, chs. i, ii.

always will ridicule what they do not believe; while the practical plea for a literary and humorous instead of a physical and malignant inquisition into popular heresy was more persuasive and more practically effective than any other of that age, not even excepting Locke's. At a time when we are imprisoning the "Peculiar People" for doing without doctors for their children, it is still well worth reading. And at a time when "empire" has become once more a popular ideal in an advanced civilisation, it is no less worth while to read the arguments in the *Characteristics*[1] as to the affinity of the arts and sciences for the life of free states, and as to the diseases incident to overgrown ones.

Not that Shaftesbury was a sworn friend of peace. His faith in the rule of infinite goodness, and in the dependence of human happiness on the play of the benevolent affections, left him a very warm partisan of the war against Louis XIV; and his last days seem to have been darkened by disappointment at the stop put to hostilities by the new Ministry. That "the fatal villainy of the priest Sacheveril, and the fall of the old Ministry and Whigs," should by his own confession reduce a devout theistic optimist to serious dejection,[2] and that he should die full of a sense of "shame" over such a national "calamity" as the granting of an easy peace to a half-ruined enemy, are notable psychological facts. Even in citing, in another late letter, his own justification of "mixed satirical ways of raillery and irony," he proceeds bitterly to speak of those ways as "so

[1] *Advice to an Author*, part ii, §§ 1, 2; *Wit and Humour*, part ii, § 2.

[2] Letter to Furly, July 19, 1712, in T. Forster's vol. of *Original Letters of Locke, Sidney, and Shaftesbury*, 1830, p. 270.

fashionable in our nation, which can be hardly brought to attend to any writing, or consider anything as witty, able, or ingenious, which has not strongly this turn. Witness the prevalency and first success of that detestable writing of that most detestable author of the *Tale of a Tub,* whose manners, life, and prostitute pen and tongue are indeed exactly answerable to the irregularity, obscurity, profaneness, and fulsomeness of his false wit and scurrilous style and humour. Yet you know how this extraordinary work pleased even our great philosophers themselves, and how few of those who disliked it dared declare against it."[1] Here the "raillery" is far to seek. The onlooking mind craves a closer adjustment of philosophy to life, and grows more than ever doubtful of the value of optimistic theories of things. It is only fair, however, to remember that it was a dying man who thus desponded with his optimistic essays under his pillow; and for the rest, that throughout his life Shaftesbury had very well fulfilled his principle that happiness lies in the exercise of the benevolent affections. The student Michael Ainsworth, son of his butler, to whom he addressed the letters collected and published in 1746, was one of several beneficiaries of his. Among the others was the deist Toland, to whom he accorded a pension, somewhat against his own bias, Toland's vivacious temperament being lacking in some of the merits he most appreciated. Yet he was never rich; and some years after his accession to the title we find him balancing[2] as to whether he can get five or six hundred a year of surplus out of his housekeeping, or whether he must

[1] Letter to Pierre Coste, July 25, 1712, in Dr. Rand's collection p. 504.

[2] Letters of 1703, in Dr. Rand's collection, pp. 315-317.

shut up the house. When we note the amount of well-doing he accomplished, we are disposed to think that in the obscure episode of his mother's angry estrangement from him in youth[1] he was not wholly to blame.

It is this spirit of practical benevolence, finally, that best countervails the æsthetic shortcomings of Shaftesbury's æsthetic essays, the *Notion of the Historical Draught or Tablature of the Judgment of Hercules,* and the *Letter concerning Design.* It is with regret that I dissent from Professor Fowler's verdict that these papers, which were incongruously included in the later editions of the *Characteristics,* show him to have had a good taste in the arts. They rather show him, I think, to have had no breadth of taste in architecture, since he despised St. Paul's as "Gothic," and to have held the typically Anglican view that painting is properly not a source of delight to the sense, but a vehicle of moral instruction. His æsthetic, as we have seen, was like his ethic Platonist and *a priori;* and when Baumgarten in the next generation began to lay the bases of a truly inductive æsthetic, he had to negate the principle on which Shaftesbury most insisted. Shaftesbury was in fact false to his own rules of *expertise,* for if he had consulted the trained tastes, those of the artists, not even in England would he have found them in accord with his. In the closing paragraph of the *Notion* he expressly insists that painting "has nothing more wide of its real aim, or more remote from its intention, than to make a show of colours, or from their mixture to raise a separate and flattering pleasure to the sense"; and though in a footnote he adds a possibly sounder plea that "it is always the best when the colours are

[1] Letters of 1696, *id.* pp. 301–5.

most subdued," it is evident that he did not value a picture as a composition in colour, but as a fingerpost to right conduct. From that hopeless standpoint one turns with satisfaction to his appeal, in the *Letter concerning Design,* for an inclusion of the whole people in the artistic culture that he hoped England would thenceforth develop. "In reality the people are no small parties in this cause. Nothing moves successfully without them. There can be no PUBLIC but where they are included." There spoke the man with a gift for morals, the "virtuoso of humanity," who advised authors to "add the wisdom of the heart to the task and exercise of the brain, in order to bring proportion and beauty into their works."[1]

And though the delicate copperplates of curious design which adorn the old octavo editions published after the author's death cannot be said to observe even his own relatively judicious stipulation that multiplicity of detail should never be allowed to perplex the eye in any design, yet their careful scrupulosity of symbolism and of execution has a certain coeval congruity with the text, while reminding us that that in turn carried in it so much more of new life. In an age of mostly restrictive and pedestrian artistic ideals, and of thinking that was apt to be splenetic when it was not commonplace, Shaftesbury rises, despite his æsthetic chains, to intellectual levels of serenity and sincerity where, though aliens and predecessors may transcend him, no English contemporary stands by his side—not the exasperated Swift, nor the otherwise embittered Berkeley, who stand on cloudier heights; and not the esteemed Addison, whose ideas are to-day so entirely negligible. Given fair play, the

[1] *Advice to an Author,* part ii. § 3; *infra,* p. 180.

Characteristics can still hold their own with most of the books with which they competed in their generation.

VII.

Of late, their author has been freshly brought before the reading world by the printing of a mass of hitherto unpublished papers of his edited by Dr. Benjamin Rand, of Harvard University, who entitles them *The Philosophical Regimen*. To this collection is prefixed the sketch of Shaftesbury's life by his son; and a selection from his published letters, with some hitherto unpublished, is appended. The whole places him in a partially new light. The thirty-four papers of the *Regimen*—entitled by himself Ἀσκήματα, *Exercises*—are in the manner of the Meditations of Marcus Aurelius, moral, philosophic, psychological, and moral-æsthetic. As Dr. Rand justly claims, they exhibit their author as laying upon himself a constant moral discipline, his aim in penning his thoughts being "only to improve by these, not publish, profess, or teach them." There could not well be any better test of a man's rightness in the "inward parts." Some diaries, such as Macaulay's, exhibit a potentiality of publication which obscurely suggests an eye to that end. Shaftesbury's reflections can hardly for a moment have been penned with any such thought; many of them are indeed, in a literary sense, unfitted for publication; and, to be quite frank, one must say that they are not particularly readable. But they thoroughly fulfil the promise of the published doctrine of the *Characteristics* in respect of their high and constant concern for the good, the just, the true, the morally beautiful. Their metaphysic is weak, their ethic predominantly noble.

Dr. Rand, at the end of his task of editing,

pronounces Shaftesbury "the greatest Stoic of modern times"; and, coupling him with Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, decides that "the Greek slave, the Roman emperor, and the English nobleman, must abide the three great exponents of stoical philosophy." Stoicism is hardly the purport of the *Characteristics*, which, after all, must remain the measure of Shaftesbury's thought; and where he failed to live up to his optimism, he fell short as a Stoic. But the palliation we must make on the former score we must grant on the latter; and I do not see that we can finally demur to Dr. Rand's panegyric. It places Shaftesbury in admirable company; and it is not too much to add that wherein he differentiates from the types with whom he is compared he adds something to their common stock of thought and merit.

MANDEVILLE

I.

A CURIOUS act of literary favouritism, to call it by no harder name, is recorded of Adam Smith,[2] in connection with the less famous of his contributions to practical philosophy, the *Theory of the Moral Sentiments*. While he was in Paris in 1776 [or 1765—his biographer is inexact in his dates], acting as bear-

[1] In the same year with the first appearance of this essay there was published at Halle the doctoral thesis of Herr Paul Goldbach, *Bernard de Mandeville's Bienenfabel.* This essay of a young German student is in many ways the most thorough research that has yet been made in connection with Mandeville's performance. Dr. Goldbach devoted himself mainly to the elucidation of the original verse *Fable,* not to the book which grew from it; but the former he handles with extreme care and completeness. He re-edits the *Fable* in the true German fashion, giving all the variants of the different editions, down to the very commas: supplies an exact bibliography of this and Mandeville's other works, with those ascribed to him; adds a note of the editions possessed by the different German libraries; and in the body of his thesis makes a very careful study of the social condition of England in Mandeville's day and the precise bearings of the *Fable* upon it. The whole suggests uncomfortable reflections as to the comparative efficiency of German and English universities. Every year young German students turn out a mass of dissertations on points in our literature, with which, as regards mere care and scholarship, there is little to compare here, either inside or outside of the Universities, which do nothing of the kind either for our own or for any other literature. The German degree-takers are expected to produce documents of permanently instructive value, and they do it, going about the work with as much thoroughness as do the scientific men of all countries in *their* monographs. Thus there is in Germany a whole pamphlet literature of scholarly studies of English authors, of which one only becomes aware by conning German second-hand booksellers' catalogues. These theses may not be works of literary genius, but they are often of great informatory value.

[2] See the *Life* prefixed to Messrs. Nelson's edition of the *Wealth of Nations,* 1831 (and later), pp. vii, viii.

leader to the young Duke of Buccleuch, he received from the then Duke of Rochefoucauld a copy of a new edition of the *Maximes Morales* of the Duke's celebrated grandfather, with the courteous intimation that, though Mr. Smith had spoken unfavourably of that work in his *Theory*, the sender so much admired the latter book as to have begun a translation of it, which he had only failed to finish because the task had been carried out by someone else. The letter contained an apology for the cynicism of the author of the *Maximes*, on the score that his lot was cast in unhealthy moral regions; and, whether in consideration of this suggestion or, as seems more probable, out of mere complaisance towards his distinguished correspondent, Smith in 1789 gave the Duke to understand that in future editions of the *Theory* he would cease to rank La Rochefoucauld with the author of *The Fable of the Bees*. And he kept his word; for whereas in the first edition Mandeville and La Rochefoucauld were gibbeted together in the chapter *Of Licentious Systems*, the Frenchman's name has now absolutely disappeared from the treatise, and Mandeville has the bad eminence all to himself. To an impartial reader of to-day the justice of such a proceeding is very questionable; and it may not be unprofitable to go into the merits of the case.

II.

Bernard Mandeville, as he called himself, or De Mandeville, as it has been the fashion to call him in biographical notices, was born, according to some authorities, at Rotterdam, but really at Dort, in 1670; and he appears to have spent his boyhood in the former city, where his father was a physician. As the name shows, he was of French ancestry; and his

work has certainly more of a French than of a Dutch cast. When he was only fifteen he published at Rotterdam an essay, *De Medicina Oratio Scholastica*, pronounced by Professor Minto in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* "a remarkably eloquent schoolboy exercise"; and he studied medicine for six years at Leyden, taking his degree in 1691, his thesis being a *Disputatio .....de chylosa vitiata.* He had previously, in 1689, published a *Disputatio Philosophica de Brutorum Operationibus.* Immediately afterwards he came to England "to learn the language," and succeeded, as Professor Minto observes, "to some purpose, writing it with such mastery as to throw doubts upon his foreign extraction." London pleased him, and he settled there as a physician. It was not till 1705 that he issued his first English publication, a short satirical poem in pamphlet form, entitled *The Grumbling Hive,* the real *Fable of the Bees,* round which has clustered perhaps a larger body of polemics than has grown out of any production of similar bulk in modern times.[1] The fable, as Mandeville avows later, is not remarkable as a piece of verse, though, like all he wrote in English, it has an ease and directness of expression implying a singularly complete conquest of the language on his part.[2] "I do not dignify these few loose lines," he writes in 1714, "with the name of a poem, that I would have the reader expect any poetry

[1] Yet the original pamphlet would seem to have utterly disappeared. The British Museum possesses only a pirated reprint in four pages quarto, which Mandeville tells us was "cried about the streets" at a halfpenny. Dr. Goldbach, I notice, tried to procure the first issue, but of course in vain.

[2] Coleridge justly ascribes to it "great Hudibrastic vigour" (*Table Talk,* July 1, 1833). Dr. Goldbach's bibliography, by the way, includes two poems, *Typhon* and *The Planter's Charity,* dated 1704, of which I can find no trace in the British Museum, and which he himself has not seen.

in them, but barely because they are in rhyme, and I am in reality puzzled what name to give them; for they are neither heroic nor pastoral, satyr, burlesque, nor heroi-comic; to be a tale they want probability, and the whole is rather too long for a fable. All I can say of them is that they are a story told in dogrel." The "story" is, in brief, that in a certain hive of bees, corresponding in all respects to England, the fraud, corruption, luxury, and vice of the various sections of society created such an outcry on the part of everybody that at length Jove swore "He'd rid the bawling hive of fraud; and did"; whereupon the hive began to decline in wealth, in commerce, in population, in power, and in industry and the arts, the decay going on till only a few bees of Spartan cast were left, and these finally "flew into a hollow tree, Blest with content and honesty." And the moral is:

> Then leave complaints: fools only strive
> To make a great, an honest hive.
> T' enjoy the world's conveniences,
> Be fam'd in war, yet live in ease,
> Without great vices, is a vain
> Utopia, seated in the brain.....
> So vice is beneficial found,
> When 'tis by justice lopp'd and bound;
> Nay, where the people would be great,
> As necessary to the State
> As hunger is to make 'em eat.
> Bare virtue can't make nations live
> In splendour.

The fable, in short, is a bold paradox, half serious, half humorous; not constructed to stand logical analysis or serve as the basis of a system of morals. As Professor Minto has seen and shown with his usual penetration, it had originally a political application. "Owing to a curious misprint in an edition published after Mandeville's death," he points out,

a wrong date is commonly assigned to the *Grumbling Hive*, and the contemporary point of it consequently missed.[1] It appeared during the heat of the bitterly contested elections of 1705,[2] when the question before the country was whether Marlborough's war with France should be continued..... The cry of the high Tory advocates of peace was that the war was carried on purely in the interests of the general and the men in office; charges of bribery, peculation, hypocrisy, every form of fraud and dishonesty, were freely cast about among the electors. It was amid this excitement that Mandeville sought and found an audience for his grimly humorous paradox that "private vices are public benefits"—that individual self-seeking, ambition, greed, vanity, luxury, are indispensable to the prosperity and greatness of a nation. .....The *Grumbling Hive* was in fact a political *jeu d'esprit*, full of the impartial mockery that might be expected from a humorous foreigner, and with as much ethical theory underlying it as might be expected from a highly educated man in an age of active ethical speculation. The underlying theory was made explicit in the *Remarks*, and the *Inquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue*, published in 1714. But his purpose in dwelling on the text that private vices are public benefits was still rather the invention of humorous paradoxes than the elaboration of serious theory.

This is perhaps the most perspicacious account that has ever been given of the matter; Mandeville's assailants having as a rule taken him up in a spirit either of intense seriousness[3] or of intense spite, and

[1] For instance, Sir Leslie Stephen (*English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. ii, p. 33) says: "The poem itself was first published in 1714. It did not excite much attention until republished with comments in 1723." In point of fact, the edition of 1714 was the reissue with comments. Professor Fraser (ed. of Berkeley, ii, 10) makes the same mistake, as does McCulloch (*Lit. of Pol. Ec.*). The confusion of dates is further confounded in my copy (ed. Edinburgh, 1772), in which, by an editorial blunder, Mandeville is made to say he published the *Hive* about 1699. Mr. A. W. Ward, again (Globe ed. of Pope, p. 391, *note*), gives the date 1708.

[2] Dr. Goldbach, calculating from the preface of the ed. of 1714, gives the date 1706. But that preface says "*above* eight years ago." The reprint is dated 1705.

[3] So Malthus: "Let me not be supposed to give the slightest sanction to the system of morals inculcated in the *Fable of the Bees*, a

his few defenders having been till lately too much occupied in exposing the unfairness or the blindness of the attack to pry into the heart of his mystery. Coleridge was one of the few to surmise his original temper: "a *bonne bouche* of solemn raillery," he calls it[1] incidentally in one of his scurrilous allusions to utilitarianism. I think, however, that Professor Minto goes a little too far in holding that in 1714 Mandeville was as much bent on humorous paradox as in 1705. A humorist he certainly was, but not, I think, "at least as much of a humorist as a philosopher," as Mr. Minto puts it. Even his prose *Remarks* on his fable are not predominantly humorous, and his other works are still less so. As we shall see, he finally avowed a change of temper. It would probably be near the truth to say that as he grew in years he became more and more concerned to develope the scientific truth that weighted his original squib: an experience to which there are abundant analogies. The *Remarks* and the *Inquiry* were followed in 1723 by an *Essay on Charity and Charity Schools, A Search into the Nature of Society,* and a sufficiently serious *Vindication of the Book;* these again in 1728 by a volume of *Dialogues,* in which, though the old humour is not lost, the work of vindication is systematically gone about; and these in turn, in 1732, by a new set of Dialogues entitled *An Enquiry into the Origin of Honour and the Usefulness of Christianity in War,* carrying the whole line of argument yet further. The writer is no mere jester. Sir Leslie Stephen, whose account of him veers a good deal,

system which I consider as absolutely false, and directly contrary to the just definition of virtue. The great art of Dr. Mandeville consisted in misnomers" (*Essay on the Principle of Population,* 7th ed. p. 492, *note*).

[1] *Table Talk,* as before cited.

does him a distinct injustice in declaring that in his preface Mandeville "avows" the diverting of his readers to be "his sole purpose." Sir Leslie has misread the text. Mandeville says: "If you ask me why I have done this, *cui bono?* and, what good these notions will produce? Truly, besides the reader's diversion, I believe none at all: but if I was asked, what naturally ought to be expected from them? I would answer that, in the first place, the people who continually find fault with others, by reading them, would be taught to look at home"—thereby learning to mend their own ways; and, further, that lovers of ease and comfort would "learn more patiently to submit to those inconveniences, which no government on earth can remedy, when they should see the impossibility of enjoying any great share of the first, without partaking likewise of the latter." The humorist comes out in the sarcasm that, after so many books have been written for the benefit of mankind with so little good result, he is "not so vain as to hope for better success from so inconsiderable a trifle"; but the notes in vindication of the poem, with all their sub-acid humour, are keenly reasoned. He must indeed have been very happily constituted to take quite humorously the storm of obloquy to which his enlarged book gave rise. The poem had, as he tells us, been taken by many, "either wilfully or ignorantly mistaking the design," to be "wrote for the encouragement of vice"; and his prose explanation only increased the outcry. On the one hand, ridiculing as he did the optimism of Shaftesbury, he had against him many of the deists; and on the other, his questionable profession of Christianity was quite insufficient to conciliate most Christians, whom he startled and irritated by his merciless reduction of

all good actions whatsoever to the promptings of self-love, or, as he later preferred to put it, self-liking. Only the tacticians, appreciative of his help against Shaftesbury, gave him any measure of good-will.[1] The orthodox majority, according to their habit, called him an atheist, besides charging him with deliberately encouraging vice; and the leading deists both of his own and the next generation concurred on the latter if not on both heads; "pernicious" being the favourite adjective for the book. Smith, as we have seen, held it up to unique reprobation; stating first that its tendency was "wholly pernicious," and further on ponderously pronouncing that, "though perhaps it never gave occasion to more vice than what would have been without it," it "at least taught that vice, which arose from other causes, to appear with more effrontery, and to avow the corruption of its motives with a profligate audaciousness which had never been heard of before."

That sentence recalls, if it was not inspired by, the ingenuous work of Berkeley entitled *Alciphron, or the Minute Philosopher*, a set of dialogues, in one of which the system of Mandeville is subjected to a quasi-refutation by the simple expedient of grossly misrepresenting it through the mouth of a foolish youth who is described as adhering to it, but who is really an impossible libertine with a set of opinions never formulated or held by any human being. Sir Leslie Stephen charitably observes[2] that "Berkeley's *Minute Philosopher* is the least admirable performance of that admirable writer." John Mill[3] says as much, and then goes a little further:—

[1] See above, p. 222.
[2] *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, ii, 43
[3] *Dissertations and Discussions*, iv, 179.

> It is most likely that Berkeley painted freethinkers from no actual acquaintance with them, and in the case of "sceptics and atheists" without any authentic knowledge of their arguments.....Like most other defenders of religion in his day, though we regret to have to say it of a man of his genius and virtues, Berkeley made no scruple of imputing atheism on mere surmise—to Hobbes, for example, who never speaks otherwise than as a believer in God, and even in Christianity; and to the "God-intoxicated" Spinoza. We may judge that he replied to what he supposed to be in the minds of infidels, rather than to what they anywhere said; and, in consequence, his replies generally miss the mark.

I venture to go a step further still, and say that the *Alciphron* is an unpleasantly unscrupulous performance. The philosopher who rose from Tar-water up to Tar-water's God, and who, according to Pope—a precious authority, certainly—had "every virtue under heaven," is in reality a very striking illustration of the demoralising effect of devout religious belief, and of the clerical function, on men in their intellectual relations with their fellows. It is pleaded for him that he saw growing corruption in society, and fancied that unbelief was the cause: the answer is that he promoted the corruption by the immorality of his own controversial methods; than which, besides, no species of immorality could be more commonplace. The philosopher had recourse to the most habitual expedient of his profession both then and now—the vilification of thinkers whose books he had not read.[1] Mandeville, in his *Letter to Dion* by way of self-vindication, takes

[1] "You are not the first, sir, by five hundred," says Mandeville (*Letter to Dion*, 1732, p. 5), "who has been very severe upon the *Fable of the Bees* without having ever read it. I have been at Church myself, when the Book in Question has been preached against with great Warmth by a worthy Divine, who own'd that he had never seen it; and there are living Witnesses now, Persons of unquestion'd Reputation, who heard it as well as I."

quite the superior position, explaining and arguing without temper yet without flippancy, and making none of the severe rejoinders that he legitimately might.

This superiority of tone comes out equally when he is contrasted with almost any one of his opponents. When he does not far surpass them in acuteness he is sure to have the advantage of them in serenity. Thus Law, the utterer of the *Serious Call,* who criticised Mandeville with considerable dialectic skill, fails of impressiveness in the long run by reason of the acrid and carping tone of his attack. Even Hutcheson, the "never-to-be-forgotten," as Smith affectionately termed him, passes from satire into spleen in his *Observations*[1] on the *Fable,* venting his bitterness in sneers at such matters as "that easy phrase 'meliorating our conditions,'" and "that most grammatical epithet 'superlative'"; which phrase and epithet are now current without challenge. Hutcheson was a devoted admirer of Shaftesbury, and could not get into a judicial attitude towards Shaftesbury's sardonic antagonist. As for poor John Dennis, who wrote a work entitled *Vice and Luxury Public Mischiefs* (1724) against Mandeville by way of fortifying the Established Church, he simply gets into the state of frenzy with which his name is so irretrievably

[1] Of which Mackintosh held that Hutcheson "appears nowhere to greater advantage" (*On the Progress of Ethical Philosophy,* 4th ed. by Whewell, p. 161, *note*). I cannot think this is so. But there is point and force in Hutcheson's preliminary analysis (*Thoughts on Laughter, and Observations on the Fable of the Bees,* ed. 1758, p. 58), of the variations of Mandeville's thesis, which takes, as he points out, five different forms:—That private vices are themselves public benefits; that they naturally tend, as the direct and necessary means, to produce public happiness; that they may be made to tend to public happiness; that they naturally and necessarily flow from public happiness; and that they will probably flow from public prosperity through the present corruption of men.

associated; pronouncing the book[1] "a very wretched Rhapsody, weak, and false, and absurd in its Reasoning; awkward, and crabbed, and low in its Wit; in its Humour contemptibly low, and in its Language often barbarous." But the contemporary attacks are too numerous to catalogue; and so strong was the chorus of denunciation that on the issue of a fresh edition in 1723 the grand jury of Middlesex "presented" it as one of a number of pernicious publications by "zealots for infidelity" "in their diabolical attempts against religion." "We are justly sensible," said the pious jury, "of the goodness of the Almighty, that has preserved us from the plague, which has visited our neighbouring nation.....; but how provoking must it be to the Almighty, that his mercies and deliverances extended to this nation, and our thanksgiving that was publicly commanded for it, should be attended with such flagrant impieties!"[2]

III.

What then was in effect the teaching which so revolted the mind of the respectable British public in the days of George the First? The alternative title of Mandeville's expanded book—*Private Vices Public Benefits*—is apt to be even more misleading to a reader to-day than it conceivably might be then; and even from Mandeville's own point of view it does not cover his whole sociological theory. His paradox is two-edged. On the one hand he argues against the censors of social corruptions, and this not merely humorously, that nearly all the evils they denounce—luxury, envy, avarice, selfishness, prostitution, and so forth—tend to benefit society in some way; on the

[1] Work cited, pref. p. 17.
[2] See Mandeville's *Vindication* at end of vol. i.

other he argued against the school of Shaftesbury that the alleged benevolent and virtuous impulses in man, prompting him to live in society and to do well by his fellows, are as surely manifestations of self-liking, or the spirit of self-assertion or self-preservation, as any other impulses whatever, and are thus to be classed with the "vices"—selfishness being always so catalogued. On the face of his theory, Mandeville was thus an extreme optimist and a good deal of a pessimist: the pessimism and the optimism being alike logically involved in the first proposition; while the second had for the ordinary reader all the effect of a depressing view of human nature. The thesis that "vices" work good, of course, is really no more a vindication of vice than is the thesis of Milton, that it is absurd to blame Deity for introducing evil into the world, seeing that without "evil" there can be no "good"; an argument constantly used by Christians and theists when they find themselves hard pressed in the defence of their faith. Strictly, Milton's proposition is the more "licentious" of the two, seeing that it asserts evil to be a necessary condition of good, while Mandeville only says it is actually found to involve good. Nay, the Christian scheme of redemption, promising as it does remission of sins on the mere condition of belief in Christ, is theoretically a stronger encouragement to immorality than the doctrine either of Milton or of Mandeville. But the orthodox disputant is always prepared to endorse the orthodox and the Miltonic principles without regard to their consequences, while ignoring, in regard to the other, everything *but* the hypothetical consequences. Emerson and Browning, being of a religious temper, are free to elaborate a pantheistic view of evil which annihilates all *a priori* ethics, including their own.

So, too, Pope may with impunity argue that "whatever is is right," though the proposition involves even more than Mandeville's; the ethics of the pious having at all times been a medley of inconsistencies, and their hatred or favour depending largely on the fashion in which their prejudices are countered or conciliated.[1] Even the deists who denounced the theses of Mandeville would not stay to ask whether Shaftesbury's Spinozan doctrine that evil was "not positive" did not imply as much potentiality of "licence" as any other. We see the same play of blind hostility and blinder sympathy to-day.

Studied in detail, Mandeville's first contention is rather a truism than a paradox. That—to take his boldest assertion—the existence of prostitutes secures the "chastity" of a number of young women who would otherwise become "unchaste," is a statement which no thinking man will very confidently dispute. To-day we go further, and point out that the comfortable life of the married women of the middle classes is in large measure provided for by the sacrifice of women of the lower; the middle-class man being saved from the burden of a family in his early manhood, not by his "prudence" but by his resort to the prostitute. So with the rest of Mandeville's propositions, many of them being now commonplaces. That strife of sects promotes religious zeal and clerical good conduct; that destruction of goods and property benefits certain producers; that avarice saves wealth; that prodigality distributes it; that the expenditure of

[1] But Gibbon, in his conformist vein, joins in the conventional outcry. Of Law, who was his aunt's spiritual preceptor, he writes, demurely: "On the appearance of the *Fable of the Bees*, he drew his pen against the licentious doctrine that private vices are public benefits; and morality as well as religion must join in his applause" (*Memoirs*, Misc. Works, ed. 1837, p. 10).

the rich is the means by which many of the poor are "employed"; that ambition and love of pleasure stimulate to exertion ; that the desire for good things causes good things to be produced—all these statements, taken simply as assertions of fact, are indisputable. The real "answer," in so far as the book called for an answer, seems never to have been given in Mandeville's own time, and indeed is given in its entirety only by the most advanced social philosophy of to-day.

Insofar as temperate rejoinders were made to the *Fable* in the eighteenth century, they were inconclusive, if not irrelevant. Mr. Minto points out as much in regard to the criticism of Johnson, which is in parts just enough. "I read Mandeville," said that pundit in his old age,[1] "forty or, I believe, fifty years ago. He did not puzzle me; he opened my views into real life very much. No; it is clear that the happiness of society depends on virtue." "The fallacy of that book is, that Mandeville defines neither vices nor benefits. He reckons among vices everything that gives pleasure." As Mr. Minto points out, and as James Mill pointed out long ago in his *Fragment on Mackintosh,* this objection (like those of Malthus and McCulloch) misses the point, for Mandeville worked on the definition of virtue and vice which was orthodox in his day. It was even then pretended that he was founding on an extravagant ascetic formula, but the student of the history of ethics knows that the fact was not so. Johnson's objection, however, happens to be a mere repetition of Smith's ; that optimistic deist, as Sir Leslie Stephen rightly describes him, having found no better argument with

[1] Boswell, Globe ed. pp. 468-9.

which to stiffen the pages of rather thin rhetoric in which he denies, deprecates, and dismisses Mandeville's doctrine. If his criticism does anything, it begs the question against Mandeville's theory of motive, and it does not even do that with any air of conviction. "I do not think," says Whately, whose treatment of Mandeville is uncommonly fair, "he [Smith] fully understood Mandeville; and if, as I believe is the fact, he had read the second volume, he can hardly be thought to have dealt fairly by the author, in omitting all mention of it."[1]

Whately's view of the book is worth notice in itself. Of Mandeville he says:—

> He was indeed a man of an acute and original, though not very systematic or comprehensive, turn of mind; but his originality was shown chiefly in bringing into juxtaposition notions which, separately, had long been current (and indeed are not yet quite obsolete), but whose *inconsistency* had escaped detection.[2] It is sufficient to remark, that he is arguing all along on an *hypothesis*, and on one not framed gratuitously by himself, but furnished him by others; and on that hypothesis, he is certainly triumphant.....His argument does not go to show *categorically* that vice ought to be encouraged, but *hypothetically* that, if the notions which were afloat were admitted, respecting the character of virtue and vice, and respecting the causes and consequences of wealth, then national virtue and national wealth must be irreconcilable..... and consequently, that of two incompatible objects, we must be content to take one or the other. Which of the two is to be preferred, he nowhere decides in his first volume; in his second, he solemnly declares his opinion, that wealth ought to be renounced as incompatible with virtue.[3]

This does credit to Whately's good feeling, but is just a little too accommodating a view to take of Mandeville's development.[4] The defensive position

[1] *Introductory Lectures on Political Economy*, 4th ed. p. 28.
[2] *Id.* p. 27. [3] *Id.* p. 28.
[4] The same may be said of the gently charitable criticism of Mr.

on which he elected to stand was that "private vices, *by the dexterous management of a skilful politician,* may be *turned into* public benefits";[1] and this does not consist with the "solemn" protestation founded on in Whately's verdict. If, however, we temper its generosity with Mr. Minto's view of the humorous purpose of the original *Fable,* and then concede that what Mandeville began as an amusing paradox latterly took a serious hold of his mind and feelings, we shall perhaps come as near as may be to a true and fair view of the case. It then becomes easy to reach a critical conclusion.

For us to-day, the fallacy of Mandeville's thesis, insofar as that is expressed by his sub-title, lies not in the definition of vice, for which he was not specially résponsible,[2] but in his implied definition of "public benefits." What he really does is to show that the "vices" of some people work good to some other people: what he fails to define, and what he ought to define, is "public benefit." Everything there depends on what you understand by "public," and our answer to Mandeville may be stated very simply thus: That no benefit is a public benefit which involves the degradation of any. So long, of course, as we do not feel as a personal grievance the hardship of others, we shall tend to find Mandeville's demonstration either satisfactory or perplexing according as we are un-

A. W. Ward (Globe edition of Pope, p. 391, *note*):—"Though Mandeville only meant to show that under the system of Providence good is wrought out of evil, he would have done well to leave no doubt as to both the meaning and the limitations of his doctrine."

[1] *A Search into the Nature of Civil Society,* end; *Vindication of the Book,* end.

[2] Though he unquestioningly adopts it. "I see no self-denial, without which there can be no virtue" (Remark (O) on *Fable*). Compare *Search into the Nature of Civil Society,* par. 9, and Dialogue iii (ed. 1772, p. 90).

prejudiced or biassed in favour of a transcendental ethic; but as soon as we attain the sense of the solidarity of society, and reason out the nature of the social interdependences, Mandeville's case becomes an exposure of social evil and a proof of the need for a reconstruction. We do not deny that such "vices" involve such "benefits"; we say we want to have our benefits of a different kind—benefits that shall be truly public, not private. The question finally resolves itself, in short, into what we now call the social problem: How are we to maintain the physical advantages of a great wealth-making system without the present drawbacks? Mandeville in effect said that it could not be done. But in reality he begged the question.

IV.

Seeing that Mandeville was never answered in this sense in his own time,[1] it would be unfair to attack him on the strength of his general account of things so far as we have discussed it; but it cannot be denied that there is a certain aggressive callousness in his treatment of the problem of poverty. He not only worked out clearly enough, in his *Essay on Charity and Charity Schools* (which is an addition to the *Fable*), that view of poverty which is now associated with the name of Mr. Spencer; going perhaps as far as that thinker, and certainly as far as Mr. Mallock; but he proposed to dragoon the poor in various ways; one of his proposals, it should be noted, being to compel them to attend church regularly on Sundays.[2] Not satisfied with insisting that the poor should not be coddled, he expresses a desire that they should

[1] Though he put the point very plainly in his *Dialogues* (iii, near beginning—ed. 1772, p. 88).

[2] Ed. 1772, p. 232.

always be numerous, as otherwise the dirty work will not be properly attended to.[1] In view of which teaching the average reader will perhaps sympathise less than he otherwise might with our author in that the proposal to drive the poor to church did not save him from the charge of attacking religion; and for the same reasons one is apt to render a somewhat tepid tribute to the piercing shrewdness of the essayist's commentary on affairs. Still, he must be credited with anticipating Smith in respect of several of his economic doctrines and demonstrations, such as the account of the advantages of the division of labour,[2] the glimpse of the true nature of international commerce, the clear detection of the bullion fallacy,[3] and the condemnation[4] of interferences with trades; credit which he needs the more because his constantly avowed aim is to keep the poor ignorant and contented in the interests of their betters. It is something in his favour, too, to be able to say that in his pamphlet on the executions at Tyburn (1725) he protested strongly and cogently against the atrocious misrule in the jails, thus anticipating Howard, if not acting in Howard's spirit; and that he makes a warm and

[1] It is a little difficult to decide how far Mandeville may be ironical in this as in some other of his propositions. The *Remarks* abound in humour; and in these (Q and Y) his doctrine as to the poor might be surmised to be satirical. He not only elaborates it, however, in his *Essay on Charity,* but recurs to it in the later *Dialogues* (vi, near end) in which he vindicates his positions. Frank cynicism rather than irony thus seems to be the explanation.

[2] This is admitted by McCulloch (*Lit. of Pol. Ec.* p. 352); and Roscher (*Zur Gesch. der englisch. Volkswirtschaftslehre,* p. 123, cited by Goldbach, p. 59, *note*) praises Mandeville on the same score. For his vigorous and on the whole rational resistance to the "mercantile" theory, see *Remarks* (L) and (Y). A French translator (cited by Goldbach, p. 5, *note*) contends that the Physiocrats had based their system on the principles of Mandeville. But the fabulist had not shaken himself free of fallacy, even as regards the mercantile theory. See *Remarks* (L) and (Q).

[3] Remark (Q) on *Fable.* [4] *Essay on Charity* (ed. 1772, p. 226).

apparently quite sincere plea for vegetarianism, on the score of the horrors of all butchering.[1] It may be, then, that if we knew more of him in his private character we should find him on the whole as likable as Doctor Johnson, to say nothing of Swift.

It is not for moral charm, however, that the modern reader will do well to turn to Mandeville. What he will find without fail is a continual play of acute, original, arresting criticism of life, put forth with a vivacity not to be found in any other serious essayist of that age; in a style certainly less fine than that of Berkeley, but not inferior even to his in general freshness of manner; and turned to account in dialogue with a degree of dramatic instinct of which Berkeley's wholly one-sided and embittered dialogue gives no example. Of Mandeville's general intellectual power a fair idea can be had from his essay *Of Free-will and Predestination,*[2] one of the most lucid and simple statements of the determinist case in our literature. The strategy of the essay is characteristic. The philosophic thesis sustained is that "what we call the will is properly the last result of deliberation," and is not therefore conceivable as "free"; and the case is thus cleared:—

> That the true motives of our will so often pass by undiscovered, is to be attributed to the swiftness of thought, and the sudden diversity of our volitions, which often succeed each other so simultaneously that when men are in haste and irresolute we may sometimes observe one part of the body yet employed in executing a former will, while another shall be already obeying the commands of a later; but when we act slowly, and, what is called deliberately, the motives of every volition must be obvious to all that have the courage as well as capacity to search into them.

[1] Remark (P) on *Fable.*

[2] In the *Free Thoughts on Religion, the Church, and National Happiness.*

> Give two men each a glass in his hand of some value, which, if he break it, he is to pay for: let the one be of a covetous nature, but no wrangler, and very pliable as to opinion; the other very positive, but lavish of his money. Dispute with either of these pretty warmly against free-will, and the power he has of dropping the glass or keeping it in his hand. The first, depend upon it, will not let it fall; and, dare him to it ever so much, he'll content himself with saying that he is sure he can do it if he will, but that he has no mind to throw away so much money to be laughed at. The other, 'tis ten to one, will dash it to pieces, and if he dares speak his mind tell you that he had rather pay for the glass than not have the pleasure to convince you of your folly, obstinacy, or what else his passion or manners shall give him leave to call it.
>
> I doubt not but both persons would be fully persuaded, and therefore might swear with a good conscience that they had acted from a principle of free-will, though it seems plain to me that each of them was prompted to what he did, and overruled, by a predominant passion.

The demonstration, however, is turned to the account of neither a "licentious" nor of an anti-religious position, but to that of simple toleration. With the same simplicity and lucidity, it is shown that the Pauline or Calvinistic view makes God the author of sin; and that the Socinian view saves the divine credit on that score solely by negating the divine prescience and omnipotence. The one loophole offered is that the dilemma of reason constitutes an insoluble mystery; that Calvin and the synergist Melanchthon, with their opposing views, were equally good and able men; and that the only possible course for reasonable people is to leave the matter forever an open question. If all of the pious persons who denounced the essayist as a pernicious teacher had been equally concerned to strive for peace in their polemic, the world, as he suggests, might have escaped much suffering.

But the really important contribution made by Mandeville to social science—the scientific truth by which he ultimately set most store and which he elaborated most fully—is his doctrine that self-regard is the basis of all moral or benevolent or "virtuous" action, as of any other, even when it takes the form of self-denial. In 1728, as we saw, he added to his book a set of dialogues, the greater part of which consists of a vindication of the author's earlier propositions on this head. In the course of the work he gives us to understand that his original fable had been to some extent a "rhapsody," and that his later remarks on it had been in part ironical; but on the instinctively self-regarding nature of all conduct he is serious and explicit. Sir Leslie Stephen has noted the acuteness of his views on the growth of language and society; and it is perhaps not too much to say that he was one of the first English writers to lay a scientific basis for sociology. A biographer of Helvetius has alleged[1] that that writer was "the first to found morality on the immovable basis of personal interest"; but the statement only proves ignorance of Mandeville's work, which was translated into French in 1750, eight years before the appearance of the *De l'Esprit*.[2]

[1] *Poésies de M. Helvetius*, Londres, 1781, p. xxx.

[2] The all-observant Buckle notes that "Helvetius, who visited London, was never weary of praising the people: many of the views in his great work on the Mind are drawn from Mandeville" (*Introd. to Hist. of Civil. in Eng.*, Routledge's ed. p. 413). The visit, however, was only made in 1764. Voltaire, too, as Buckle also notes, was impressed by Mandeville. He confessedly imitated the *Fable* in his *Le Marseillois et le Lion* (see the *Avertissement*, ed. Garnier, vol. x), and he has a passage on it in the *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, art. *Abeilles:* "Il est très-vrai que la société bien gouvernée tire parti de tous les vices; mais il n'est pas vrai que ces vices soient nécessaires au bonheur du monde. On fait de très-bons remèdes avec des poisons, mais ce ne sont pas les poisons qui nous font vivre. En réduisant ainsi la Fable des Abeilles à sa juste valeur, elle pourrait devenir un ouvrage de morale utile."

It might be urged, indeed, that Mandeville owes something to Hobbes, who of course pointed to the root principle of self-interest plainly enough; but Mandeville's exposition is so penetrating and so independent that even his assailants do not seem to have denied his essential originality. Perhaps he owed more to Shaftesbury, whose optimism he controverted, but whose naturalism he in effect endorsed; but such a derivation tends to carry us yet further back—to Spinoza, whom he is likely to have studied, though he makes only a disparaging reference to his "atheism." Mandeville may fairly be said, however, to have followed in the wake of La Rochefoucauld, whom, as we saw, Adam Smith had originally put in the same category in his review of ethical systems; and the only possible technical justification of the exclusion of La Rochefoucauld from the blame passed on his successor is that the *Maximes* are rather a set of epigrams, written for their own sake, than an ethical treatise. On no other ground can the Frenchman fairly be passed by while the Dutch-Englishman is censured. Mandeville, indeed, seems to work quite independently, though he cannot but have heard of La Rochefoucauld's work; and while, on the one hand, the maximist makes the subtler analyses of *amour propre,* the fabulist in his prose addenda makes a connected demonstration of the principle. Nothing in Mandeville goes deeper, perhaps, than La Rochefoucauld's remark that we confess our faults and weaknesses only in a spirit of self-love—that we secretly pique ourselves in that case on our candour; but La Rochefoucauld, on the other hand, does not attempt to apply his doctrine systematically to the entire history of society—indeed he never troubles himself about the history of society at all,

though he has studied human nature profoundly enough.

One might go on for pages balancing the two against each other; but the end of our comparison, I think, would be the decision that Mandeville has done the greater service to human thought, while La Rochefoucauld has made the more brilliant contribution to literature. Mandeville, with all his comparative coarseness of statement, has constant sight of the scientific truth, though he is often unscientifically perverse in his rendering of it; La Rochefoucauld really restricts us too much to the contemplation of the men of the courts and camps of his time and country. Take, for instance, his celebrated reflection that "in the misfortunes of our best friends we find something not displeasing to us"; careful self-study will (I hope) convince all of us that the fact is not so, the misfortunes of our best friends being found to be unmixedly painful. The fact is that La Rochefoucauld, as his grandson said to Smith, saw men in the conditions most deadly to real friendship; and he wrote of what he saw. Mandeville, with all his surgeon's coolness, never denied that sympathy and pity were sources of keen pain; he tried only to show that, because they were instinctive, no credit could be taken for them as virtues. Here, of course, he was working on the contemporary theological definition of virtue, which made self-denial a *conditio sine qua non;* and, whatever he proved in regard to the operation of vices, his paradox destroyed the transcendental doctrine of virtue. The comparatively temperate author of *Deism Revealed,*[1] noting that Shaftesbury "labours to prove mankind, of whom he knew but

[1] Ed. 1751, vol. ii, p. 217.

little, benevolent, public-spirited, and by nature good," decides that neither he nor Mandeville is right. "In most controversies, truth is on one side or other, or, at least, in the middle; but in this between Shaftesbury and Mandeville it is really nowhere; men are not what either represents them." But in denying that there is even a "middle," the critic has left himself no standing-ground; and, besides, he has evidently misunderstood Mandeville's position. Mandeville, indeed, is a little confusing, but his service is none the less effective because of the inconsistency involved in his language. When he proves that the courteous and outwardly unselfish man gratifies his developed self-love, he narrows the field of "virtue" in the old sense considerably; but when he shows that pity is now as fundamental a passion as fear; that "thousands give money to beggars from the same motive as they pay their corn-cutter—to walk easy"; that the murderer may in a given case feel pity as strongly as the good man; and that the prostitute may use her child well, while the poor girl-mother may strangle her babe for shame, and yet again prove a tender nurse to those she bears in wedlock—when he thus reduces the "benevolent" impulses to instincts, he has led us over the threshold of the truth that the "virtuous" tendencies are simply those which are held to make for the general well-being, or are sanctioned by an accepted moral code, while the "vicious" are those of a different order. To-day we are not going to throw away the words "virtue" and "vice" because their contents are found to be different from what was once supposed: we simply recast the formulæ. Mandeville, in short, is one of the real founders of utilitarianism; and the foundation, with all its defects, is perhaps sounder

than a good deal of the later building.[1] But not merely does he prepare the way for a rational system of morals: he foreshadows the whole evolution doctrine by his rigorous inquisition into the biological bases of social phenomena.

Between him and Shaftesbury the question lies in a nutshell, and to clear it is to cross the *pons asinorum* of evolutionary ethics. In the non-technical sense, one was an "idealist," the other a "realist." Both reasoners are Naturalists, aware that morality roots in human interest, and therefore is not dependent on any revelation or any theology. Shaftesbury, however, being primed by his theistic optimism, argues as if this recognition got rid of all moral difficulty—as if "human interest" did not imply "clash of interest," and as if men could actually be capacitated at all times to see the beauty of justice and righteousness, even as deducible from their own formulas. His case was, in sum, that the right course is the morally beautiful, useful, and fitting course. Mandeville, a Naturalist with a difference, given to analysis rather than to synthesis, and accustomed to look at human nature as a physician, saw that taste in morals varied endlessly; that multitudes had no palate for the moral use or beauty of Shaftesbury's ideal; that each's "interest" is simply that which each desires; and that each organism must infallibly energise on the line of its bias. He rightly contended, therefore, that there is no absolute in morals. It followed that men concerned for right conduct should

[1] Even James Mill, while chivalrously defending Mandeville against the discreditable aspersions of Mackintosh, goes on to say that he does not think mankind are as Mandeville described them; a concession made, I think, rather on sentimental than on logical grounds. Certainly Mandeville is astray in some inessentials; but he ought to be judged by his essentials.

strive to impose their ideals on others ; and, crediting such men in the past with "inventing" or fostering useful conventions by appealing strongly to certain kinds of bias, he argued that in the present the best thing to be done was to keep the poor in poverty in order to force them to work, and (here almost smiling in our faces) to preach the precepts of practical religion by way of morally hypnotising them.

Obviously he had not reached logical finality. On his own repeated showing, failure to obey the precepts of "religion" is normal among those who entirely accept its sanctions. On this head Mandeville always equivocated, doubtless ironically. In his sixth dialogue[1] he so puts the *pros* and *cons*. as to leave no case for his own ostensible advice. "Multitudes," he makes his orthodox disputant say, "are never tainted with irreligion ; and the less civilised nations are, the more boundless is their credulity," while "on the contrary, men of parts and spirit, of thought and reflexion.....if their youth has been neglected.....are prone to infidelity." Ergo, there must be assiduous teaching of what such minds are inapt to believe. All the while, it is the unquestionably religious multitude that in the terms of the case exhibits most misconduct. The antagonist replies that what is wanted is to train the young morally, not dogmatically. The first speaker retorts that "nothing has contributed more to the growth of deism in this kingdom." The argument is at an end. Mandeville in his heart is with the rationalists, not with the dogmatists ; and what withholds him from going the whole way with them is partly his prudence and partly his pessimism. Logically, his rejection of Shaftesbury's moral

[1] Ed. 1772, ii, 261 sq.

optimism should have included the theism on which it was based ; and at this point he either temporised or dogmatised.

But the practical effect of his reasoning, alike for theists and for thorough Naturalists, is to stress the inductive and objective views of the moral problem as against the *a priori* and the subjective. Here he was doing a real service to science, not only paving the way for the evolutionary conception, but preoccupying for Naturalism the ground which would otherwise have been held for dogma as against optimistic theism. Where the theologians would have made the alternative lie between idealising pantheism and irrational faith, Mandeville sardonically indicated that there was another. And to-day social science must embody his point of view as well as the other.

V.

As his thought ripened with experience he cut ever more deeply to the roots of his problem. The *Enquiry into the Origin of Honour,* published in the year before his death, is in several respects his most stringently reasoned performance. In his preface, as he was wont, he sums up his argument ; and it is after a rapid induction from the etymology of such words as virtue (from *vir*), clown (from *colonus*), and villain (from *villein*) that he writes :—

> *Moral,* for aught I know, may now signify *virtue,* in the same manner and for the same reason that *panic* signifies *fear.* That this conjecture or opinion of mine should be detracting from the dignity of moral virtue, or have a tendency to bring it into disrepute, I cannot see. I have already owned that it ever was and ever will be preferable to vice, in the opinion of all wise men. But to call virtue itself eternal cannot be done without a strangely figurative way of speaking. There is no doubt but all mathematical

truths are eternal, yet they are taught; and some of them are very abstruse, and the knowledge of them never was acquired without great labour and depth of thought.....

All propositions, not confined to time or place, that are once true, must be always so, even in the silliest and most abject things in the world; as for example, It is wrong to under-roast mutton for people who love to have their meat well done. The truth of this, which is the most trifling thing I can readily think on, is as much eternal as that of the sublimest virtue. If you ask me where this truth was before there was mutton, or people to dress or eat it, I answer, in the same place where chastity was before there were any creatures that had an appetite to procreate their species. This puts me in mind of the inconsiderate zeal of some men who, even in metaphysics, know not how to think abstractly, and cannot forbear mixing their own meanness and imbecilities with the ideas they form of the Supreme Being.

There is no virtue that has a name, but it curbs, regulates, or subdues some passion that is peculiar to human nature; and therefore to say that God has all the virtues in the highest perfection wants as much the apology that it is an expression accommodated to vulgar capacities as that he has hands and feet, and is angry. For as God has not a body, nor anything that is corporeal belonging to his essence, so he is entirely free from passions and frailties.....The holiness of God, and all his perfections, as well as the beatitude he exists in, belong to his nature; and there is no virtue but what is acquired.

The truth last put is at least as old as Aristotle;[1] and Mandeville is hardly more consistent in his grasp of it than was Bacon, who endorsed and then ignored it;[2] but the collocation of it with a thoroughly naturalistic conception of the evolution of morals was perhaps never before that day better achieved than by Mandeville. It is in this connection that he vindicates his ostensibly extravagant proposition that morals originated in the craft of rulers. Taken

[1] *Nicom. Eth.* vii, 1.
[2] *De Augmentis Scientiarum,* B. vii, c. iii.

literally, the doctrine is, as Sir Leslie Stephen says, preposterous. A moral bias must exist before "rulers" can take advantage of it; but when Mandeville goes on to show how the "point of honour" has been evolved on the same lines as the conception of "virtue," it begins to appear that under the exaggeration of his phrase there lies the scientific conception of forms of moral opinion as fostered variations. The thesis is clearly put in the first dialogue of the *Enquiry into the Origin of Honour*:—

Horatio. But pray come to the point, the origin of honour.

Cleomenes. If we consider that men are always endeavouring to mend their condition and render society more happy as to this world, we may easily conceive, when it was evident that nothing could be a check upon man that was absent, or at least appeared not to be present, how moralists and politicians came to look for something in man himself, to keep him in awe. The more they examined into human nature, the more they must have been convinced that man is so selfish a creature that, whilst he is at liberty, the greatest part of his time will always be bestowed upon himself; and that whatever fear or reverence he might have for an invisible cause, that thought was often jostled out by others more nearly relating to himself.....It is highly probable that skilful rulers, having made these observations for some time, would be tempted to try if man could not be made an object of reverence to himself.

Hor. You have only named love and esteem: they alone cannot produce reverence by your own maxim: how could they make a man afraid of himself?

Cleo. By improving upon his dread of shame; and this, I am persuaded, was the case. For as soon as it was found out that many vicious, quarrelsome, and undaunted men, that feared neither God nor Devil, were yet often curbed and visibly withheld by the fear of shame; and likewise that this fear of shame might be greatly increased by an artful education, and be made superior even to that of death, they had made a discovery of a real tie, that would serve many noble purposes in the society. This I take to have been the origin of honour, the principle of which has its foundation

in self-liking; and no art could ever have fixed or raised it in any breast if that passion had not pre-existed and been predominant there.

Hor. But how are you sure that this was the work of moralists and politicians, as you seem to insinuate?

Cleo. I give those names promiscuously to all that, having studied human nature, have endeavoured to civilise men, and render them more and more tractable either for the ease of governors and magistrates, or else for the temporal happiness of society in general. I think of all inventions of this sort, the same which [I] told you of politeness [*Fable of the Bees*, Part ii, p. 132], that they are the joint labour of many. Human wisdom is the child of time. It was not the contrivance of one man, nor could it have been the business of a few years, to establish a notion by which a rational creature is kept in awe for fear of itself, and an idol is set up that shall be its own worshipper.[1]

Thus stated, the doctrine is seen to have a content not recognised by Mr. Lecky, who cites an earlier statement of it only to vituperate it.[2] Obviously the formula is askew, inasmuch as "moralists and politicians" themselves belong to the category "man," and in the terms of the case their moral perception figures as spontaneous. But there remains the truth—now freshly illustrated for westerns by the case of Japan—that moral ideals are matter of "invention" and inculcation like arts and sciences, and that a given ethic is simply a variation which has survived—the source of variation being perhaps somebody's "genius."

Had the case been thus put, it would have been possible on Mandeville's behalf partially to turn even the home thrust of Hume: "Is it not very inconsistent for an author to assert in one page that moral distinctions are inventions of politicians for public interest; and in the next page maintain that vice is

[1] *Enquiry into the Origin of Honour*, 1732, pp. 38–41.

[2] *Hist. of European Morals*, 6th ed. i, 6.

advantageous to the public?"[1] The parry would consist in saying that the original "invention" needed overhauling; that morals had become conventionalised; and that it was necessary to have a fresh valuation. Not that that answer would have saved the thesis of "private vices, public benefits."

But the service done by Mandeville, when all is said, lies in his method, not in his results. He is of the tribe of Machiavelli, one of the spirits who face the realities of life and put aside conventions to reach their own estimate. "One of the greatest reasons," he writes, in the Introduction to his *Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue*, "why so few people understand themselves, is that most writers are always teaching men what they should be, and hardly ever trouble their heads with telling them what they really are. As for my part, without any compliment to the courteous reader or myself, I believe man (besides skin, flesh, bones, etc., that are obvious to the eye) to be a compound of various passions, that all of them, as they are provoked and come uppermost, govern him by turns, whether he will or no." And he insists again:[2] "To understand human nature requires study and application, as well as penetration and sagacity." In medicine, as in morals, he was a sceptic and a naturalist; and his book *Of the Hypochondriack and Hysterick Diseases*,[3] while vending a good deal of fantasy concerning the bodily "spirits," after the fashion of the time, insists from the first on a closer and more patient study of nature. It is this vital hold on permanent fact that makes Mandeville

[1] Essay *Of Refinement in the Arts.*

[2] Dialogue ii (ed. 1772, p. 75); cp. Dial. iv (p. 134).

[3] So in later editions. The first and part of the second have "Passions" for "Diseases."

fresh and stimulating for us to-day, keeping him worth reading now in connection with the most advanced science in history, sociology, and biology.[1] And yet, somehow, he has practically passed out of sight for the general reader.[2] I suppose it is partly because of our intense prudery and still prevailing superstition; partly because of that turn for optimistic platitude which is so much more characteristic of English thought than any "practicality" or "hatred of shams." Our timidity about "the nude" extends to truth in general. In France, despite the "restrictions banales" which M. Thénard believes[3] will long continue to be made there on the teaching of La Rochefoucauld, that writer is a familiar classic; and even in this country it is certain that many will acquiesce in Mr. Saintsbury's outspoken vindication of him who would shrink from Mandeville. Mrs. Grundy has always made exceptions in favour of foreigners. "It may be," said Mr. Horne once,[4] "that false modesty, and social as well as religious hypocrisy, are the concomitant and the counterpart of the present equivocal state of our civilisation; but if I were not an Englishman, it is more than probable I should say that these qualities were more glaringly conspicuous in England than in any other country."

VI.

It would be finally unwarrantable to dismiss as mere conventional prejudice the hostility to Mandeville shown by Mr. Lecky in the section on utilitarianism

[1] See, for instance, Dialogue iii.

[2] An edition, issued in 1844, of Law's *Remarks*, with a characteristically rambling and purposeless preface by Maurice, gives, I think, the last reprint of the *Fable* in England.

[3] Préf. to ed. of La Rochefoucauld, 1881, p. 38.

[4] Ingram's *Life of Poe*, i, 253.

which begins his *History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne,* a section which is perhaps the least durable portion of an ill-coördinated book. But when Mr. Lecky adds to his always inconclusive because always misconceiving criticism of utilitarian ethics the use of at once question-begging and vituperative terms, which can only browbeat the uninstructed while doing nothing for the student save repelling him—then we are justified in imputing to the scholar the temper of unscholarly bigotry. To begin by calling Mandeville's theory (taken not as a whole, but in a section admittedly inconsistent with the main and notorious thesis) "perhaps the lowest and most repulsive form" of the principle that virtue rests on self-interest; to reiterate the term "repulsive" and call the scheme in question "selfish"; and yet again to speak of Hobbes's system as attaining intellectual grandeur though "starting from a *conception* of human nature as *low and base* as that of Mandeville"—this is not to reason and confute, but to eke out weak argument with abuse. Such was the tactic of Mackintosh, who dismissed the whole subject with a "not to mention Mandeville, the buffoon and sophister of the alehouse: or Helvetius, an ingenious but flimsy writer, the low and loose moralist of the vain, the selfish, and the sensual"[1]—thus coarsely contemning the acute and original fabulist and the benevolent and beloved Helvetius, while giving complaisant notice to Shaftesbury, Hartley, Tucker, and Paley. As against such a deliverance it is not uninteresting to cite the judgment of one whom Mackintosh had occasion once to characterise[2] as failing "in little but the respect due

[1] *On the Progress of Ethical Philosophy,* 4th ed. by Whewell, p. 69.
[2] *Id.* p. 303.

to the abilities and character of his opponents." Says Macaulay, in his early essay on Milton[1] :—

> If Shakespeare had written a book on the motives of human actions, it is by no means certain that it would have been a good one. It is extremely improbable that it would have contained half so much able reasoning on the subject as is to be found in the *Fable of the Bees*. But could Mandeville have created an Iago? Well as he knew how to resolve characters into their elements, would he have been able to combine those elements in such a manner as to make up a man, a real, living, individual man?

The criticism is an arresting one ; and on reflection it recommends itself as just. It is certainly well borne out, as regards the last sentence, by the *Virgin Unmask'd*. But the praise remains very sufficient, and is not lightly to be discounted. Elsewhere in the regions of propriety, too, there has been heard at times a reasonably open-minded verdict on the *Fable:* it was Miss Mitford, I think, who once pronounced it the wittiest and wickedest of modern books. Browning,[2] finally, appears benevolently to credit Mandeville with holding his own elastic doctrine, presumably derived through Shaftesbury and Pope and Priestley, that evil, while perceptible only as contrary to good and necessarily to be hated and resisted as such, is somehow good from a non-human point of view. The interpretation will not stand; but the endorsement is notable. It is the professed philosophers who have been loudest to cry "shocking."

Even Sir Leslie Stephen, I think, gives undue countenance to the Grundyite view of Mandeville by calling him a "prurient" writer, and accepting old gossip to the effect that Mandeville was given to

[1] *Essays*, Student's ed. pp. 3-4.

[2] *Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in their Day.*

ribald talk in the coffee-houses.[1] "Mandeville," he says, "was giving up to the coffee-houses a penetration meant for loftier purposes"; and he accuses him of "brutality," and of wearing a "detestable grin" when he shows us the "hideous elements that are fermenting beneath" the Shaftesburyan "coating of varnish." All this is a little over-strained. If Mandeville was a prurient writer, Pope must be pronounced very prurient indeed; and in fact half the writing of his time must be similarly censured. He is perhaps not so absolutely innocent as James Mill made out: his *Virgin Unmask'd* is not an entirely well-meaning performance; but even the most dubious part of that is far more of a realistic study than a prurient production; and the bulk of the book runs to politics and rather stilted narrative. The valid objection to him is on the score of his deficiency in sympathy, which is bad enough, but can hardly be called "brutality"; and in any other sense he is much less brutal than Swift. As for the "detestable grin" which Sir Leslie Stephen discovers, I have not been struck by it; and I cannot see the point of the charge that the coffee-houses got the best of Mandeville's gift of penetration. How many more books would the critic have had from a practising physician?

VII.

In view of the severity towards Mandeville shown by such writers as Hutcheson, Adam Smith, and Mackintosh, it cannot be said that his unpopularity

[1] Dr. Goldbach (pp. 32-3, *note*) notes that Schlosser (*Gesch. d. 18 Jahrh.* i, 408) says Mandeville's life corresponded to his book, but answers with Tabaraud (*Hist. Crit. du Philos. Anglais*, 1806, ii, 248) that there is no evidence for such defamatory statements.

is substantially due to his repute for unbelief in religion. Open heterodoxy could bring upon Spinoza the passionate hatred of generations of Christians; but in the case of Mandeville, as in that of Machiavelli, the charge of unbelief was rather a pretext to aggravate a resentment felt on other grounds than a spontaneous protest. Men were unaffectedly exasperated at seeing themselves held up to the light like so many impaled insects, by observers whose utter dispassionateness was more wounding than the savage contempt of Swift. But Mandeville certainly added to the volume of resentment against him by indicating a tranquil incredulity as to Christian dogmas while habitually calling himself a Christian. He might soothe churchmen at one time by mercilessly dissecting the graceful theistic schema of Shaftesbury; but when he turned the edge of his criticism towards the church as a factor in human conduct he was as unpleasant reading for the priests as he had ever been for the heretical optimists. It would be difficult to discredit Christianity more effectually in that day than Mandeville did by simply weighing its claims as a moralising force. The stress of the deistic criticism had lain on the issue of credibility; and the defence ran largely to saying that freethinkers were not and could not be good men. Mandeville in effect shrugs his shoulders over the question of belief, barely taking the trouble to indicate skepticism.

> "Nothing is easier," he writes, "than *to believe;* men may be sincere in their faith, and even zealous for the religion they profess, and at the same time lead wicked lives, and act quite contrary to their belief." "Throughout the nation the Christian faith, according to the common acceptation, is that part of our religion in which the generality of the people are the least defective; if we inquire of those who attend the greatest profligates in the

last moments of life, even the ordinaries of prisons, we shall hear but few complaints as to this point."[1]

Like other freethinkers of his day, he makes deft use of the language of Archbishop Tillotson, a Broad Churchman a century before the Broad Church. Indeed he was something more than a Broad Churchman who wrote—

> We will suppose that about the time when universal ignorance and the genuine daughter of it (call her devotion or superstition) had overspread the world, and the generality of the people were strongly inclined to believe strange things; and even the greatest contradictions were recommended to them under the notion of mysteries; being told by their priests and guides that the more contradictious anything is to reason, the greater merit there is in believing it—

by way of preamble to a discussion of the mystery of the Eucharist. It is after quoting a long passage couched in this strain from Tillotson, and another from Taylor on the improbabilities of Scripture, that Mandeville writes: "No candid reader can imagine that I would endeavour to make slight of faith, or lessen the reverence that is due to the real mystery of our religion, *any more than* either of these prelates"; and we can imagine the growl with which some readers saw their religion reduced to a haze of uncertainty, to the end of forcing them to confess that they had no right to force creed subscription on anybody, and that the only tenet they could confidently hold was the existence of a God whom they could not conceive.

For the rest, Mandeville's own way of handling the "mysteries" leaves small room for doubt as to his own convictions:—

> In the idea we can form of the supreme being, the first attributes we are convinced of are his power and wisdom,

[1] *Free Thoughts on Religion, the Church, and National Happiness*, 2nd ed. 1729, pp. 6–7.

though in a degree of perfection vastly beyond our capacity to conceive; and if we continue in that contemplation we shall find that the unity of a God must be equally necessary with his existence: but as soon as we admit of reveal'd religion and the gospel, we meet something that surpasses, if not shocks, our understanding, which is the divinity of Jesus Christ, and that of the Holy Ghost. Men may cavil and wrest words to their own purpose as long as they list; but whoever has read the New Testament with attention, and denies that he has found any such meaning hinted at there, must be either very blind or very obstinate.

What then must we do in this dilemma? Shall we reject part of the gospel, or say that there are three gods, and so speak not only against the clearest ideas we have of the deity, but likewise the plainest doctrine of the same gospel as well as of the Old Testament? Not to be guilty of either, we ought to treat this point with the utmost diffidence of our own capacity.....The more we endeavour to explain this mystery the more intricate we shall find it; and it will less startle and fight reason when propounded in a few words according to the simplicity of the scriptures than it does by that great train of explications that accompany it in Thomas Aquinas's commentators.....It is impossible men should ever entertain the same sentiments of a matter which is unintelligible in its nature; and it is to be admired how so many men of sense and good logicians as this point has been controverted by for so many ages could ever imagine that anything could be a fit subject for disputation, which no language can give them the least idea of..... Others may interpret for us as they please, and impose upon us what forms they think fit; but whoever will attend to what passes in his own mind may soon be convinced that believing is not a thing of choice. Our Church pretends not to infallibility, which implies that all her members are at full liberty to re-examine whatever she has taught them.[1]

Mandeville and Shaftesbury thus joined hands on the great practical issue of their day, the wringing of legal toleration for heresy from monopolist churchmen and opinionated fanatics. Whether or not they were

[1] *Id.* pp. 71–73.

on the right side by force of their being in the minority, on that side the freethinkers then as later stood; and to their polemic is mostly due what advance was made in their age. Mandeville, for his purpose, freely quoted Bishop Taylor *On the Liberty of Prophesying;* but Taylor himself, after bearing his testimony, fell from light, and condoned persecution.[1] The freethinker, more fortunate, stands out for posterity in the light of the great virtue to which he remained loyal, and which makes practical amends for so much negative shortcoming in active sympathy.

If, after all, orthodoxy is still concerned to hold him up to odium on the score of the shortcoming, in revenge for his exposure of the vast failure of Christianity to make men either just or compassionate one to another, it must be noted that Mandeville to the last professed to admire the Christian ethic. "After all," says Horatio to Cleomenes at the end of his last dialogue, "I can't see what honour you have done to the Christian religion, which yet you ever seem strenuously to contend for, whilst you are treating everything else with the utmost freedom"; to which Cleomenes replies that "no discovery of the craft or insincerity of men can ever bring any dishonour upon the Christian religion itself. I mean the doctrine of Christ, which can only be learned from the New Testament, where it will ever remain in its purity and lustre." This attitude, though certainly not orthodox, has so often passed for an acceptance of Christianity that it cannot plausibly be identified with an anti-Christian temper for the mere purpose of saddling on rationalism the scandal of the thesis that "private vices are public benefits." To all appearance, Mandeville thought on

[1] See the admissions of his biographer Willmott, *Bishop Jeremy Taylor,* 2nd ed. 1848, p. 200.

the Christian religion very much as did Locke, whose mode of adhesion is not commonly disclaimed. No doubt Mandeville was farcing when he solemnly arraigned Shaftesbury as a deist;[1] but his language concerning Bruno and Vanini[2] is worthy of Warburton; and it is certain that the author of *Deism Revealed* had no pretext in Mandeville's works for describing him as an assailant of Christianity.[3] But his value for us as a thinker is not affected by the question of his private attitude towards creeds; it lies in the "tart cathartic virtue" of his criticism of men and manners; in the downright force and fearlessness of his speech. "Of all the writers on the side of infidelity," admits the author of *Deism Revealed,* even while thus misrepresenting him, "this had the greatest stock of wit and experience: his stile, indeed, is a little lumpish, but it is clear and strong." Smith thinks the style, though humorous, was one of "coarse and rustic eloquence"; but in point of fact it is more pungent, nervous, and effective than Smith's own; and the humour is an added superiority. Pope's pointless half-line[4] in the *Dunciad* was probably penned with the poet's usual independence of personal inquiry. It may be noted to Mandeville's credit, finally, that he was a keen advocate of realism in art,[5] and that he is nearly unique in his generation in his insistence on the intellectual capacities of women.[6] That may

[1] Dialogue vi, end.

[2] Remark (R) on *Fable.* He describes both as atheists, which they were not, and gives a quite erroneous account of Vanini's end.

[3] Lechler, in his careful *Geschichte des Englischen Deismus,* does not mention Mandeville at all.

[4] B. ii, 414.

[5] Dialogue i.

[6] Dialogue iv (ed. 1772, pp. 142–3). I do not recollect any earlier proposition of a similar kind in our literature, save that of Defoe in his *Essay on Projects,* 1698. In Mandeville's Dialogue i, the woman is given the best of the argument on art. It must be confessed, however, that Mandeville's criticism does not in general spare women any more than men.

win him a measure of feminine consideration to-day, and he certainly needs some such special recommendation to secure much of it.

GIBBON

I.

It gives a literary man something of a shock to realise that there is only one historian in modern times who is generally read *as* a historian after the lapse of over a hundred years. Only the ancients, it would seem, are secure of what we call immortality in that province, and not all of *them*. Herodotus and Thucydides are indeed inevitable, the first in virtue of his primordial fashion, the second for his mastery, and both by reason of their monopoly; but it is hard to say who now reads Livy for his interest. Mr. Lang tells us that it was a singularity on Mr. Grant Allen's part to spend an evening over him in his university life; and it is certain that the repute of Sallust for style no longer brings him willing readers, whatever may be the hap of Tacitus. As for Diodorus the Sicilian, and Dionysius the Halicarnassian, and Dion Cassius, they may go hang; it is only the researcher who gives them heed.

Medievals are in not much better case: even Comines and Froissart are not thought a necessary part of either a liberal or a conservative education; and it is long odds that even Clarendon and Bishop Burnet, whose interest as literature is greater than their value as history, are to-day little read save by special students. Men will not now give the time their fathers gave to the past: and what they do give they prefer to spend on recent historians who revise

and condense. Of the admired compilers of the eighteenth century, only one, our one, holds his ground. Hume as a historian no longer counts. Robertson, who was as popular and as well paid in his day as Macaulay in his, is forgotten: you can buy his complete works almost at waste-paper price; Watson and Henry, his countrymen, are rarely even to be seen on book-barrows. Voltaire, to be sure, is still supposed to be read in history because he was Voltaire, and because the *Essai sur les Mœurs* and the *Siècle de Louis XIV*—neither of them a history proper—have real sociological value; but *Charles XII* is not now seriously regarded by adults. Gibbon alone of that age is re-edited, re-published, and re-read.

On more than one count the fact is surprising. If the power to learn were as common as the habit of reading, or even of reading Gibbon, the *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* would be the most educative, politically, of all historical works; whereas it quite obviously failed to educate the nineteenth century. It has not educated the Russians, who presumably have translations of Gibbon:[1] it has not educated the Germans; it did not educate Guizot, who translated him a second time for the French, and it has therefore probably counted for little in their education; it has not educated the Italians, who probably do not read Gibbon much;[2] above all, it

[1] The only one in the British Museum Catalogue is dated 1883–86: I do not know if it is the first. There was a Polish version in 1830, and a Greek in 184-. In French there are four translations, two of which were begun in Gibbon's own day.

[2] He was, however, translated into Italian in his lifetime, the translator taking care to append treatises by way of orthodox antidote to some of Gibbon's heresies. See the *Autobiography*, note to Memoir E in Murray's ed. 1896, p. 322: placed in the text of Sheffield's ed. Of this Italian translation, the last volume was destroyed; but another appeared in 1820–24.

has substantially failed to educate the English. Still they read him : at least, the excellent edition of Mr. Bury was abundantly bought. The explanation, I take it, lies in the nature of Gibbon's gift, partly in his greatness, but partly also in his very defects. In any case, he constitutes a unique problem, were it only because he is such a solitary specimen in literature ; and to-day, perhaps, the task of understanding him is more feasible than it used to be. To begin with, through the happy resurrection of the Lausanne portrait by General Meredith Read,[1] we of these days are enabled to see Gibbon as none of his English contemporaries saw him after he became famous—as he was in his blond prime, before his face was deformed by corpulence and dropsy. To look on that portrait is to secure at once a correction of our habitual impression, set up by the grotesque mask of disease preserved for us by Reynolds. But above all, we have the true transcript of the six memoirs out of which Lord Sheffield, or rather his daughter, all too skilfully constructed the classic *Autobiography;* and we have the true text of the letters which the same hands at times so strangely manipulated—not only suppressing at will, but at times piecing a bogus letter out of scraps taken from several. If we cannot realise him now, we never shall ; and after all it is not quite certain that the twentieth century will cherish him to the end.

[1] In his *Historic Studies in Vaud, Berne, and Savoy, from Roman Times to Voltaire, Rousseau, and Gibbon* (Chatto & Windus, 2 vols. 1897). In those copious posthumous volumes a number of Gibbon's letters are printed for the first time, a year after what was meant to be the definitive "centenary" edition (Murray). The reproduction of the portrait with the present essay in the *Reformer* is believed to be the first after that in General Read's work, from which it was copied with permission.

T

II.

In the life of Gibbon we learn, first of all, how many conditions must or may combine to yield us a great performer in any field. In his case, even seemingly adverse items count in the end for good. First there is the sickly child, with a great head and a small and feeble body,[1] which last entails on him a semi-invalid life till he has thoroughly fixed his bookish bent.[2] Withheld for the greater part of his boyhood from that regular schooling which in England then, as now, served mainly to turn out mobs of young animals of one brand, he had in that period read dozens of volumes of history, ancient and modern, European and Oriental, and much else, theology included. Educational orthodoxy would of course have had him play hockey or cricket instead, through five or more years spent in not learning the Latin grammar, and so grow into an average Briton, warranted to think nothing new. A series of happy mischances, including the circumstance of a rather careless father,[3] left him to develop a blessed variation. And not the least fortunate chance, perhaps, was that father's sudden decision, so often blamed, to

[1] The whole family stock was stamped with malady. Five brothers and one sister were born after our Edward, and all died in infancy. He himself was so sickly that all five brothers were in succession baptised Edward, to preserve that name in the family in the case of his death. In the last years of his life he writes of his endless illnesses as a child, that "My body is still marked with the indelible scars of lancets, issues, and caustics" (*Autobiography*, the unmutilated ed. 1896, pp. 37, 112–13).

[2] His aunt Charlotte Porten (who kept him alive during the years when his mother, always child-bearing, could not attend to him) began his education, and gave him his first love of reading. At her boarding-school in London, later, he was allowed to study in his own way, free from the bullying companionship of his robust fellows.

[3] His mother died when he was ten, of her seventh confinement, at the age of thirty-eight.

enrol the boy as a gentleman commoner at Oxford at the age of fourteen,[1] when, almost suddenly, his hitherto wretched health became strengthened, and he seemed at last fit for a normal career. The zest with which he turned, not to study but to undergraduate pleasure, showed what might have become of him had he been healthy from the start; but destiny now saved him from frivolity as before from mediocrity.

Gibbon's account of his idle fourteen months at Magdalen College is one of the best-known episodes in autobiography and in university history. It tells of a decadence of academic life hardly to be matched in the Catholic Europe of that period; and seeing that genius is at best a rare variation, and that the average man cannot evince it in virtue of any opportunities, but may yet be much bettered by careful culture, it is obvious enough that England was thus going back incalculably in the intellectual life. There is no saying what was lost through the state of things which left or drove Gibbon to evolve his individuality.[2] But the fact remains that the utter neglect alike of teaching and of discipline in Oxford about 1750 did conduce to his mental making, though he himself, on looking back, could see only a scandalous episode of disorder.

[1] Born May 8th, 1737, Gibbon went to Oxford in 1752.

[2] "An academical education in England," wrote Lord Sheffield forty years later in a note to his edition of Gibbon's *Autobiography*, "is at present an object of alarm and terror to every thinking parent of moderate fortune. It is the apprehension of the expense, of the dissipation, and other evil consequences, which arise from the want of proper restraint at our own universities, that forces a number of our English youths to those of Scotland, and utterly excludes many from any sort of academical instruction."—*Gibbon's Misc. Works*, 1796, i, 52. Gibbon himself remarked, in a suppressed passage (Memoir F, p. 95) that "the inveterate evils which are derived from their birth and character must still cleave to our ecclesiastical corporations."

First, he was left free, like Adam Smith, to read and think for himself, instead of having his plastic young mind fixed in the moulds of as cramp a theory of life as modern times have seen. Where Smith, at the age of seventeen, took to philosophy and sociology, Gibbon at fourteen carried on his boyish propensity to theology,[1] being fascinated by the problems raised in Middleton's *Free Inquiry* concerning ancient ecclesiastical miracles; and he had the luck, by turning Catholic, to get himself cut adrift from Anglican Oxford[2] and England, and sent by his flurried father to the care of a Protestant pastor at Lausanne. The father was himself no zealot in religion, being indeed something of a deist, and the friend of David Mallet, who edited Bolingbroke's posthumous works. But the deists discriminated sharply between an Anglican Protestantism which had grown half deistic in spirit and tone, and the "superstition" of "Rome"; and it was after colloquies with friends at Mallet's house, whither Edward had been taken by his father on his official expulsion from Oxford, and where the lad was repelled by his host's opinions, that the Swiss plan was decided on.

The episode of conversion to Catholicism is already a proof of the independent turn given to the boy's spirit by his invalid experience and his precocious reading. A robust lad, whether a genius or not, could not at that age have made the psychological growth needed for either the inquiry or the decision:

[1] "From my childhood I had been fond of religious disputation; my poor aunt has been often puzzled by my objections to the mysteries which she strove to believe" (*Autobiography*). As one of her favourite books was Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*, she cannot have been very orthodox.

[2] "By the fact of his conversion to Romanism he had ceased to be a member of the University." It was his father who divulged the fact of his conversion (June, 1753).

he would have gone on maturing under the obscure control of educational habit; and it seems more than likely that had Gibbon reached adolescence in the Oxford environment, his very clear eye to the main chance, then sufficiently developed by his father's thriftlessness, would have led him to choose "the fat slumbers of the church"[1] as his natural refuge from the hardships of what for his class was a small income. In that event there had probably been no History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, but instead some treatise on ecclesiastical antiquities, or the development of the papacy.[2]

For it was only in his precocious boyhood that he had enough concern about creed as such, or enough quixotry, to get into serious trouble about the inference to be drawn from the evidence as to ecclesiastical miracles. The large-brained boy, whose mind had so far been formed in the atmosphere of books, and gathered nothing of "the world's slow stain," exhibited all the moral fervour that was congenital to him, and acted as only an enthusiast would act in later life. Even the credit of this has been denied him by his Comtist critic, the late Mr. Cotter Morison, who observes that

> No one nowadays, one may hope, would think of making Gibbon's conversion a reproach to him. The danger is rather that it should be regarded with too much honour.

[1] "I lamented that at the proper age I had not embraced the lucrative pursuits of the law or of trade, the chances of civil office or India adventure, or even the fat slumbers of the church."—*Autobiography*, Murray's ed. p. 275.

[2] In writing this I had forgotten Mr. Cotter Morison's speculation (*Gibbon*, p. 13) that if Gibbon had become a churchman "his literary labours would probably have consisted of an edition of a Greek play or two, and certainly some treatise on the Evidences of Christianity." I question both guesses. Gibbon had not much passion for mere academic scholarship, and he never did much violence to his convictions.

> It unquestionably shows the early and trenchant force of his intellect; he mastered the logical position in a moment; saw the necessity of a criterion of faith; and being told that it was to be found in the practice of antiquity, boldly went there, and abided by the result. But this praise to his head does not extend to his heart. A more tender and deep moral nature would not have moved so rapidly. We must in fairness remember that it was not his fault that his religious education had been neglected at home, at school, and at college. But we have no reason to think that, had it been attended to, the result would have been much otherwise. The root of spiritual life did not exist in him. It never withered, because it never shot up.....He had no profound associations to tear out of his heart.....If we read the *Apologia* of Dr. Newman, we perceive the likeness and unlikeness of the two cases.....Ground which Gibbon dashed over in a few months or weeks, the great Tractarian took ten years to traverse. So different is the mystic from the positive mind.[1]

Such "fairness" is edifying, apart from the acceptance of Gibbon as a "positive" mind by a Positivist. The mental experience of a boy of fifteen is pitted against that of a full-grown man, who had received all the culture of which he was capable; and because the boy saw clearly and acted swiftly where the man swayed confusedly and acted crookedly for long years, the boy is to be damned as having no "spiritual life" or tenderness of nature, while the man is credited with "conscience and heart ties, 'strong as life, stronger almost than death,'" which "arrested the conclusions of the intellect." To make the injustice complete, not a word is said in this connection of Gibbon's faithful affection for his kin and friends,[2] which in late life he exhibited to a degree never seen in Newman; nor is a word said of Newman's own

[1] *Gibbon*, in "English Men of Letters" series, pp. 16–17.
[2] Admitted by Mr. Morison at other points (pp. 57, 142, 169).

admission that "upon a syllogism"[1] he utterly broke with his heretical brother (a fanatic with a difference), and that when he was in France, before his conversion, his Anglican fanaticism made him shut himself in his chamber and refuse to look on a "liberal" people[2] —admissions which are now supplemented by his brother's account of how he "could not permit" his sister's pretension to think for herself.[3]

Spiritual life, otherwise the life of "the heart," appears on Mr. Morison's view to consist in a temper which paralyses at once natural affection and rational judgment, and keeps a man, it may be, fanatical now on this side and now on that, but always necessarily fanatical. Decidedly the mystic is different from the positive mind; and if we were to judge from Mr. Morison it might appear that the Positivist mind is different from both, though it be as ready to extol the zealot as to disparage his contrary. For Mr. Morison had shown the same lack of critical balance in his earlier work on St. Bernard, wherein superstition and fanaticism are laurelled, and nascent rationalism vilified,[4] in a fashion which Comte himself, one would think—in any mood save that in which he proposed a day of cursing for Julian—must have felt to be over-done. Happily neither Positivism nor positivism is likely to codify a criterion which makes the life of the heart and the "spirit" consist in either the neurotic negation of human ties or the prostration of the intellect before tradition. Rational criticism will indeed not give "too much honour" to a boy's

[1] *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, ed. 1875, p. 47.
[2] *Id.* p. 33.
[3] F. W. Newman, *Contributions.....to the early history of the late Cardinal Newman*, 1891, p. 113.
[4] Compare the comment of Mr. R. L. Poole, in his *Illustrations of the History of Medieval Thought*, 1884, p. 146.

conversion from Protestantism to Catholicism; but it will not think to keep the balance true by giving the excess of honour to the spirit of unreason.[1]

For the rest of us, it may suffice to note that Gibbon's intellectual interest in theology and church history, thus early evinced, was one of the propensities which made him, by Newman's later admission, the one great ecclesiastical historian of his age, and by so much the better fitted to write the history of the Roman Empire. With the solitary exception of Bayle, who was by nature too much of a discursive casuist to be a devoted historian, he was the first student of ecclesiastical origins who combined thorough knowledge with perfect detachment of spirit. In him, the cessation of fear of the Lord constituted a beginning of wisdom. The series of his lucky chances continuing, he found in his Swiss guardian a man of kindly good sense, but no special culture;[2] and after the good man had ostensibly persuaded him, at the end of a year's patient discussion, that transubstantiation was a worse difficulty than the Protestant cessation of miracles, he was beneficently left to himself. To all appearance, Gibbon effected his own re-conversion as he effected his own conversion, by seeing things, after study, from his own point of view. He never tells us at what point he

[1] It was Mr. Morison's idiosyncrasy to be unable to deliver himself from the partisanships of youth even when he had given up the beliefs on which they had proceeded; and to the last he copied Comte's fallacy of demanding, on the score of historic relativity, a wholly sympathetic estimate of the characters of past pietists, however narrow and intolerant, while constantly refusing the same measure to their rationalist critics, however humane.

[2] "Truth compels me to own," wrote Gibbon in one of the suppressed passages of one of his six sketches of his Autobiography, "that my preceptor was not himself eminent for genius or learning." "A just though superficial knowledge of most branches of literature" is the further criticism that Lord Sheffield and his daughter allowed to stand. (Ed. cited, p. 135.)

passed to absolute disbelief in Christian supernaturalism; and the chances are that he moved on that line in the year in which pastor Pavilliard was talking him out of Catholicism.

Through the enamel of Gibbon's highly artificial style it is hard to reach any vivid sense of his earlier psychological states; but in that first year of his Swiss life, especially in the earlier months, when he could not converse, and lacked what for him had been "the indispensable comfort of a servant," he must have known much moral suffering. "My condition," he writes in his latter years, "seemed as destitute of hope as it was devoid of pleasure"; and in a suppressed passage of one of the memoirs[1] he writes concerning Madame Pavilliard, who half-starved him: "I now speak of her without resentment, but in sober truth she was ugly, dirty, proud, ill-tempered, and covetous." What he would have said of her while he did harbour resentment it would be entertaining to know. Moral and intellectual pride might for a while withhold the boy from surrender; but when the ravenous reader, having mastered French, found himself again free to try his profoundest appetite on the library of his tutor, everything must have conduced to make him feel that what began to look like the differences of Tweedledum and Tweedledee were not worth being miserable for. In his conversion, as he tells in one of his suppressed pages, "the hard doctrine of transubstantiation ['transubstantion' it stands in his precarious spelling, which yields also the form 'transubstantian'] was smoothed by the protestant belief in the mystery of the trinity";[2] and when transubstantiation began to look like

[1] Ed. cited, p. 132. [2] *Id.* pp. 128-9.

nonsense, the trinity can scarcely have remained intact. What he tells us is that his reversion "was principally effected by my private reflections," and that he had felt a "solitary transport at the discovery of a philosophical argument"—a very oddly constructed one—against the Catholic mystery, to wit, that the text which alleges the real presence is vouched by only one sense, our eyesight, while it is disproved by three—sight, touch, and taste. If it was really that argument that set Gibbon against transubstantiation, he was certainly acute enough to see that it told equally against the "mysteries" accepted by Protestants.

He proceeds to tell that "the various articles of the Romish creed disappeared like a dream ; and after a full conviction, on Christmas Day, 1754, I received the sacrament in the church of Lausanne"; and he adds, in his most significant manner of innuendo: "It was here that I suspended my religious inquiries, acquiescing with implicit belief in the tenets and mysteries which are adopted by the general consent of Catholics and Protestants." After the publication of the unexpurgated Memoirs it is pretty certain that even as regards his frame of mind in 1754, this is the solemn jest, the "official" falsehood, it was naturally taken to be by his contemporaries. In one of the suppressed passages he tells that while he was staying at his father's house at Buriton in 1759 he went to church "commonly twice every Sunday, in conformity with the pious *or decent* custom of the family"; and that he was there wont to follow the lessons and readings in the Greek of the New Testament or the Septuagint. He then continues :—

> Nor was the use of this study confined to words alone : during the psalms, at least, and the sermon, I revolved the

> sense of the chapters which I had read and heard; and the doubts, alas! or objections that invincibly rushed on my mind were almost always multiplied by the learned expositors whom I consulted on my return home.....Since my escape from Popery I had humbly acquiesced in the common creed of the Protestant Churches; but in the latter end of the year 1759 the famous treatise of Grotius (*De veritate religionis Christianæ*) first engaged me in a regular trial of the evidence of Christianity. By every possible light that reason and history can afford, I have repeatedly viewed the important subject; nor was it my fault if I said with Montesquieu, "*Je lis pour m'édifier, mais cette lecture produit souvent en moi un effet tout contraire,*" since I am conscious to myself that the love of truth and the spirit of freedom directed my search. The most accurate philosophers and the most orthodox divines will perhaps agree that the belief of miracles and mysteries cannot be supported on the brittle basis, the distant report, of human testimony, and that the faith as well as the virtue of a Christian must be formed and fortified by the inspiration of Grace.[1]

Even if we take this as it stands, without cavil, it is clear that the "doubts" of 1759 were not the first; and that if he then first made a "regular trial of the evidence" he had previously been impressed by the need for such a trial. There thus remains a reasonable presumption that when he reverted to Protestantism in 1754 he was already a doubter; and in any case it is clear that when at the age of twenty-four he published his first work, the French *Essai sur l'étude de la littérature,* and began in earnest his studies for his History, he was at most a philosophic deist.

Thus was completed his detachment from common religious prejudice—an essential qualification of a historian who should justly write the history of the Roman Empire. But yet another detachment was

[1] Memoir C, pp. 248–250. The final sarcasm is borrowed from Hume.

involved in his mere change of place.[1] Apart from his study of original authorities, Gibbon is a product not of English but of French scholarship. "Every man who rises above the common level," he truly says, "has received two educations: the first from his teachers; the second, more personal and more important, from himself."[2] But how he is to educate himself depends largely on his intellectual environment. In the libraries of Lausanne this was substantially French; and French scholarship, from Tillemont to the *Mémoires* of the Academies, had collected and interpreted antiquity for him to an extent that the students of no other nation had then approached. To this day those researches are valuable; and Gibbon's debt to them is great. The earliest extracts from the journal of his special historic studies (which as preserved begins in 1761, while he was serving as a captain of militia in England, and was making up his mind on what should be his *magnum opus*), refer almost solely to French scholars' works; Homer, at that stage, he read with French grammars; he praises Fréret and de la Bletterie in his first writings with an ardour that he seldom showed in later life for anything; and in 1762 we find him studying Tillemont's *Histoire des Empereurs*, with the note: "It is much better to read this part of the Augustan history in so learned and exact a compilation than in the originals, which have neither method, accuracy, eloquence, nor chronology."[3]

[1] "Such as I am, in genius or learning or manners, I owe my creation to Lausanne: it was in that school that the statue was discovered in the block of marble; and my own religious folly, my father's blind resolution, produced the effects of the most deliberate wisdom." —Memoir B, p. 152—a suppressed passage. Compare that preserved by Sheffield, who has, however, substituted "banishment" for "shipwreck."—Memoir C, p. 239.

[2] *Autobiography*, Memoir C, p. 231—embodied in Sheffield's version. A different expression is given in Memoir B, p. 131 of ed. cited.

[3] In the *Autobiography* he avows the use he made of both of the great

On this puissant help he relied to the last. Mr. Bury, his latest and most competent editor, pronounces that "it is only just to the mighty work of the Frenchman to impute to him a large share in the accuracy which the Englishman achieved. From the historical though not from the literary point of view, Gibbon, deserted by Tillemont, distinctly declines."

French, too, by his own avowal, was Gibbon's training in logic. The bulky and now forgotten system of De Crousaz, who indeed was of the school of Locke, the young Gibbon "studied, meditated, and abstracted" till, he says, "I had obtained the free command of an universal instrument, which I soon presumed to exercise on my Catholic opinions." In his second year at Lausanne we find him mastering, besides French and Latin, "with which I was very superficially acquainted before," Giannone's History of Naples in French, the Abbé Banier's treatise on Mythology, and Boehat's *Mémoires sur la Suisse;* "but what I esteem most of all," he adds in his journal, "from the perusal and meditation of De Crousaz's Logic, I not only understood the principles of that science, but formed my mind to a habit of thinking and reasoning I had no idea of before." Not till 1756 does he mention that he "read and meditated Locke upon the understanding."

Clearly he gained intellectually from being bilingual, from being not merely a French student but an English lad transplanted into French conditions, and guarded by his antecedents against loss of independence, there as before. The "languid state of science at Lausanne," he tells, made him "solicit a literary correspondence with several men of learning";

works of Tillemont, "whose inimitable accuracy almost assumes the character of genius."

but of these one was French (Crevier, of the University of Paris); one German (Gesner, of Göttingen); and one German-Swiss (Breitinger, of Zürich). With the two latter he corresponded in Latin; and England at this stage had no part in forming him: he had "ceased to be an Englishman." What intercourse he had with his countrymen in his earlier years at Lausanne was not advantageous: they led him into "some irregularities of wine, of play, of idle excursions," the play going so far that he lost a hundred and ten guineas.[1] After this he left them alone, and "seclusion from English society was attended with the most solid benefits." As he himself summed up the case in his Autobiography:—

> If my childish revolt against the religion of my country had not stripped me in time of my academic gown, the five important years, so liberally improved in the studies and conversation of Lausanne, would have been steeped in port and prejudice among the monks of Oxford. Had the fatigue of idleness compelled me to read, the path of learning would not have been enlightened by a ray of philosophic freedom. I should have grown to manhood ignorant of the life and language of Europe, and my knowledge of the world would have been confined to an English cloister. Had I obtained a more early deliverance from the regions of sloth and pedantry, had I been sent abroad with the indulgence which the favour and fortune of my father might have allowed, I should probably have herded with the young travellers of my own nation, and my attainments in language and manners and science would have been such as they usually import from the continent. But my religious error

[1] For this sum he astutely wrote home to his devoted aunt; but that lady drew the line at such a draft, and, to his deep disgust, laid the matter before his father. His stepmother, who became an excellent mother to him, thus annotated for Lord Sheffield the boy's letter to his aunt: "Pray remember this letter was not addressed to his mother-in-law, but his aunt, an old cat she was to refuse his request." Posterity will not endorse the epithet, and Gibbon after a year certainly would not have done so.

> fixed me at Lausanne, in a state of banishment and disgrace; the rigid course of discipline and abstinence to which I was condemned invigorated the constitution of my mind and body; poverty and pride estranged me from my countrymen; I was reduced to seek my amusement in myself and my books; and in the society of the natives, who considered me as their fellow-citizen, I insensibly lost the prejudices of an Englishman.

It is to his French reading of those years, finally, that he most markedly ascribes the qualities of his later work.

> I cannot forbear to mention three particular books, since they may have remotely contributed to form the historian of the Roman Empire. 1. From the *Provincial Letters* of Pascal, which almost every year I have perused with new pleasure, I learned to manage the weapon of grave and temperate irony, even on subjects of ecclesiastical solemnity. 2. *The Life of Julian,* by the Abbé de la Bletterie, first introduced me to the man and the times; and I should be glad to recover my first essay on the truth of the miracle which stopped the rebuilding of the temple of Jerusalem. 3. In Giannone's *Civil History of Naples* [French translation] I observed with a critical eye the progress and abuse of sacerdotal power, and the revolutions of Italy in the darker ages.

He might perhaps have added that he gained something from Montesquieu, as he avows that his "delight was in the frequent perusal" of that writer, "whose energy of style and boldness of hypothesis were powerful to awaken and stimulate the genius of the age." But that raises the question of his special bias as a historian, which we shall have to consider at another point.

In fine, it was his fortune to gain some special qualification from nearly every circumstance of his career. When, after five years at Lausanne, he returned to England, and, after an interval, proceeded

there to serve as a captain of the Hampshire militia[1] for over two and a half years, even that ostensible waste of time really counted for much, as he himself claims, in fitting him to deal with military history. He threw himself into his work with a zest not often displayed by British officers of militia or anything else, doing the work not only of his careless father, the major, but of the equally careless old colonel; and though Gibbon confesses, with regard to his drinking bouts with the colonel, that "the same drum which invited him to rest has often summoned me to the parade," and that "those acts of intemperance have sown in my constitution the seeds of the gout,"[2] he seems in other ways to have toughened his constitution; and he really learned how troops are handled and armies fed. All the while, recoiling from the "rustic officers, who were alike deficient in the knowledge of scholars and the manners of gentlemen," he contrived to read and even to study in months of furlough, keeping by him always his Horace, re-reading his Homer, and mastering a treatise on tactics. As he summed it up in a familiar sentence, "The discipline and evolutions of a modern battalion gave me a clearer notion of the phalanx and the legions; and the captain of the Hampshire Grenadiers (the reader may smile) has not been useless to the historian of the Roman Empire."

When, finally, his father died in 1770, the fates had once more been signally propitious. After his Italian journey (1764–5) Gibbon had returned to his father's house, to spend "the portion of my life which I passed

[1] A considerable militia was at that time embodied, under apprehension of a French invasion. Gibbon showed himself ready enough to defend his country.

[2] Suppressed passages in Memoirs B and C, pp. 189, 259–260.

with the least enjoyment, and which I remember with the least satisfaction," though he rose in that period to a lieutenant-colonelship of militia. His father's wasteful ways bade fair to consign him to poverty; and the fear of that weighed upon his faculties. As Mr. Morison has well noted, "A few more years of anxiety and dependence.....would probably have dried up the spring of literary ambition and made him miss his career." But just as the danger becomes imminent his father dies, and he becomes his own master, with the power to carry out his great plan. So many are the chances that must at times concur to permit of a genius giving the proof of what is in him. Not in the case of Shakespeare himself are the pressures and permissions of fate more impressive as determinants than in that of Gibbon.

Even his experience as a member of Parliament,[1] though worse than undistinguished—since he not only never spoke but voted mechanically for the ruinous policy of Lord North, and in return held for a time a well-paid sinecure—was profitable to him as an introduction behind the scenes of active political life. And it is essential to remember that not till he had made much of this practical acquaintance with men and life did he follow up, at an interval of fifteen years, the abortive *Essai* of his youth with the first volume of

[1] In 1774 he was offered by his cousin Edward (afterwards Lord) Eliot the seat for the pocket borough of Liskeard. Accepting, he was returned at the general election of that year. In 1779 he received the post of Lord Commissioner of Trade and Plantations, with a salary of £750. At the general election of 1780 his cousin withdrew the Liskeard seat, for no clear reason (see Gibbon's letters of August 11th and September 8th). In 1781 Gibbon was returned for Lymington at a by-election; but the Board of Trade was abolished in 1782. In 1783 he resigned and went to live with his friend Deyverdun at Lausanne. His debt to the companionship of that accomplished and amiable friend has not been commonly recognised, but is rightly insisted on by General Read (ii, 292).

his massive masterpiece, the great *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.*[1]

III.

We have seen in outline the path of growth, the pressure of environment, that determined the life's work of the historian; but we have still to reckon with the specific cast of the organism, the bias and genius that would have subsisted somehow, however undeveloped, in any environment. Again there is no obscurity. The master tendencies of Gibbon are stamped upon his whole work, and are abundantly avowed in his Autobiography and letters.

To see them in full relief we need but compare his early failure, the *Essai sur l'étude de la littérature* ("written in two months, and forgotten in four") with the *History* and the *Autobiography,* his great successes. To the *Essai,* while recognising its special fault of incoherence, he always looked back with a good deal of complacency, precisely because it represented some measure of capacity for a kind of effort that in his *History* he had almost ceased to make, and so lost power for. Its ideas, being those of a precocious young student, are not exactly deep, and not always original; and their inconsequence is already significant of lack of zeal for theoretic construction; but they stand for real reflection, genuine and hardy speculation. "To the eyes of a philosopher," he writes in his youthful *Mémoire sur la Monarchie des Mèdes* (a creditable and highly suggestive research written between 1758 and 1763), "events compose the least interesting part of history. It is the knowledge of man, the ethics and the politics he finds there, that

[1] Published in February, 1776. The second and third volumes appeared in 1781.

exalt it in his mind";[1] and to the last he is in a manner true to this ideal. In his youthful journal he notes how the reading of one book would open up to him many trains of thought; and in his later years he again tells how in his studies he "stept aside into every path of inquiry which reading or reflection accidentally opened."[2]

This indeed lies on the face of his work, with its tireless variety of theme; and when Coleridge, in his classic paragraph of disparagement, which we must later examine, denies him all merit as an interpreter of historic movement, he is merely giving vent to the spite which in his latter years flowed from him at every contact with the work of an unbeliever. "The true key," he declares, "to the declension of the Roman Empire—which is not to be found in all Gibbon's immense work—may be stated in two words: the *imperial* character overlaying everything, and finally destroying the *national* character. Rome under Trajan was an empire without a nation."[3] It is pretty decisive of Coleridge's own merit as a critic in such a case that this very unoriginal formula, which is at best a mere description or definition of a total process without any account of real causation, was actually bettered by Gibbon in his youthful *Essai*, where, confessedly following Montesquieu, he remarks[4] that "the *corruption* of all orders of the Romans arose

[1] *Miscellaneous Works*, vol. iii, 1815, p. 45.
[2] *Autobiography*, Memoir E, p. 340.
[3] *Table Talk*, August 15th, 1833.
[4] § 81—end of the *Essai*. Montesquieu had said: "Si la grandeur de l'empire perdit la république, la grandeur de la ville ne la perdit pas moins"; pointing out further, as against the historians who saw nothing wrong save the strifes of classes, that such strifes were normal and necessary, and that "ce fut uniquement la grandeur de la république qui fit le mal, et qui changea en guerres civiles les tumultes populaires" (*Grandeur et décadence des Romains*, ch. ix). Here is a step in real explanation which Coleridge does not take.

from the extent of their empire, and produced the greatness of the republic," adding in a footnote: "I distinguish between the greatness of the Roman empire and that of the republic: the one consisted in the number of its provinces, the other in that of the citizens." The whole of Coleridge's formula is here, with an added explanation; and Gibbon further notes that whereas "an ordinary degree of penetration is sufficient to discern when an action is at once a cause and an effect.....it requires an extraordinary judgment to discern whether two things, which always exist together, and appear intimately connected, do not reciprocally owe their origin to each other"—a remark which, with its sequel, tells of deeper reflection than Coleridge gave to the problem.

It is worth noting, also, that while modern criticism, albeit more temperate than Coleridge's, may find Gibbon lacking as an interpreter of the process he unrols, some in his own generation rather held him to err in excess of interpretation. At least, as he himself notes in the Autobiography, the Abbé de Mably asked, "Is there anything more wearisome than a Mr. Gibbon who, in his eternal history of the Roman emperors, suspends every instant his slow and insipid narrative, to explain to you the causes of the events that you are going to read? Nothing ought to arrest me in a recital; and it must be clear —that is the first law for every historian; but it must be made so with an art that shall not repel me."[1] On the face of his treatise, however, Mably is grown splenetic and unreasonable in his old age; and his further fling at Gibbon[2] suggests even the special

[1] *De la manière d'écrire l'histoire*, 1783, pp. 217–218.

[2] P. 331.

personal enmity he is said to have felt,[1] though he is tolerably comprehensive in his censures. Gibbon certainly did not overdo the tracing of causes: it is in failure to trace them closely and fully that his limitation lies. He indeed made a signal and admirable effort to trace on natural principles the causes of the rise of Christianity; and he had his thanks in the explosive resentment of the orthodox and the intuitional, who denounced him precisely where he had surpassed himself and raised all historiography to a higher scientific plane. But whether or not the outcry against his fifteenth and sixteenth chapters checked his zest for sociological study, he never again attempted such a large service to historic science; and when, as at the end of his fifty-third chapter, he gives us a just and philosophical view of the causes of Byzantine stagnation, he is but applying a sociological law laid down by Hume.[2] Broadly speaking, he grows less explanatory, less sociological, as he proceeds.

In this one respect he compares closely with both Macaulay and Carlyle. All three had in youth a genuine interest in historical explanation, in synthesis, in comprehension of causes; and all three came to write laborious histories in which the conception of synthesis and causation has either disappeared or lingers only as a fitful parenthesis. Macaulay, who in his maturity has perhaps least concern for a sociological seizure, had in his youth perhaps not the least faculty for it to be seen in the three. It is the

[1] See the story as given in the Autobiography (from the Supplement to a later edition of Mably's book) of Gibbon's having exasperated him in discussion. Gibbon deftly retaliates by praising the better works of Mably, and adding that "*even* the *Manière d'écrire l'histoire* contains several useful precepts and judicious remarks."

[2] Essay *Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences.*

immense acquisitive faculty in his case, with his vibrating energy, that finally expels the instinct of reverie. Carlyle's trouble was his raging impatience of all calm analysis, his need to feel that he saw truth intuitively, whereof the end is prophetic obscurantism. The too eupeptic Gibbon, more equably impressible, never quite lost his early appreciation of general ideas, of speculative analysis; but his long absorption in the immense pageant of his history, his over-mastering interest in the many-patterned web he wove, soon sated his philosophic needs, and left him at last wondering respectfully how he came to have so many abstract ideas in his youth.

IV.

We must take him as we find him, dowered with the devouring eye and the insatiable ear, unwearied with infinite detail, sitting in his quiet belvedere before the vast vistas of an extinct world. No mystic, no poet, he is content simply to know how once it all went; to fix its sequences; to unearth its ruins and make plain its roads; to rehearse, with a slow and tranquil mastery, the lapse of its generations, their strifes, their creeds, their follies, their crimes, their hapless sufferings, their mysterious decadence. He is at home in those echoing solitudes. No item in the endless vision is too small for his scrutiny; no cataclysm staggers his composure: with the same imperturbable complaisance he follows the slow decay of a mighty civilisation and the wild inroads of the barbarians who work its downfall: he is equally alert to argue over their exact line of march, to compliment their energy, to dismiss a myth concerning their extraction, chronicling "now a bubble burst, and now a world." He may tell us, with his formal

phrase and courtly gesture, that "the history of empires is the record of human misery,"[1] and that "history is indeed little more than the register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind,"[2] but all the while he is well at his ease in his ruined Zion: to the last he is without passion as he is without gloom, and the iron cannot enter his soul. With clear, untroubled eyes he scans curiously each new scene in the eternal drama, unaffectedly interested in every phase, steadily sedulous to know all there is to be told. We can figure him following Virgil through the Inferno with ink-horn and scroll, pleasantly tolerant of his guide's moralities, amiably cataloguing the victims, accurately noting the itinerary, and gathering statistics as he goes. Often he is conscious of comedy, *la comédie humaine,* and his wise smile is full of a well-bred relish; but the far-off long-drawn tragedy oppresses him not. Might he not say, with the physician, that his vocation would be insupportable if he should let himself be hourly saddened by the age-long vision of "the sorrow and the labour and the passing-away of men"?

Such a gift, in such measure, is as rare as any: it is genius, in virtue of its fulness and its rarity. Some historians are concerned with battles, some with archæology, some with geography, some with literature, some with law, some with the aspect of life, some with moral phases, some with particular peoples; but Gibbon takes in all. "Before I was sixteen," he tells us, "I had exhausted all that could be learned in English of the Arabs and Persians, the Tartars and Turks"; his first childish essay was "On the Age of Sesostris"; and in his miscellaneous

[1] *Essai sur l'étude de la littérature,* § 1.
[2] *Decline and Fall,* ch. iii, Bohn ed. i, 102–3.

remains are special studies in the history of Naples, Denmark, the House of Brunswick, Burgundy, Switzerland, Feudalism, the Sybarites, and the Medes, to say nothing of twenty excursuses on matters classical. When he settled on his subject he absorbed it whole. He knows the old world in its physical aspect as a good traveller knows the modern; he can paint like a Canaletto, like a plan-drawer, the cities he never saw, placing his finger on the sites of the vanished forts, the wharves, the palaces; he knows the lie of the land in every province, has journeyed with Cicero and Horace to Brundisium, and marched with Julian from Paris to Constantinople. Whatever is known in his day concerning revenues, taxes, statistics of ancient population, the routes and the staples of commerce, the status of magistrates; whatever testimony is yielded by coins and medals and monuments—the whole circle of antiquarian knowledge is his. And all the while he is never so distracted by detail as to fail in formal arrangement, never so moved by any aspect of things as to let it over-balance his picture. He is the first to bring the history of Roman law into intelligible sequence; the specialists who can correct him on points of detail admit his easy and orderly grasp of the evolution. From first to last he is an artist in form.

This would be as readily recognised to-day as in his own time were it not for the inevitable distaste that has set in towards his style. Even in our day it has been admired, by such variously modern spirits as Mr. Cotter Morison and Mr. Bury; and it must always be allowed the praise of art and elaboration;[1] but its

[1] Though it is not so vigilantly correct as Mr. Morison represents it to be (p. 166). For instance, he constantly misplaces "only," like all the rest of us, from Stevenson downwards.

faults are more vital than its merits. From the first it was denounced by the men who, besides disliking Gibbon's opinions, had in them a faculty for a freer and more organic way of utterance—for instance, Burke and Coleridge. Burke called his style "vicious and affected, deformed by too much literary tinsel and frippery";[1] Coleridge held it "detestable," while piously counting it "not the worst thing about him." Quite recently it has been solemnly arraigned by Mrs. Meynell, who is of opinion that Ruskin often used "which" where "that" would be "both more correct and less inelegant," and that he probably "had the habit from him who did more than any other to disorganise the English language—that is, Gibbon." She further pronounces "the common language of letters, the refuse of an English style, profusely ready to the hand of every writer in the middle of the century," to have been "a derogation not so much from Johnson as from Gibbon."[2] The charge of disorganising the language surely goes too far. Gibbon indeed affected for the worse the style of several historians in the nineteenth century, in particular Milman and Merivale, in their own despite; not to speak of the slovenly and platitudinous Alison, whom no example could serve to make a good writer; but he did not so influence Hallam, James Mill, Macaulay, Grote, Buckle, or Thirlwall; nor did his lead ever spoil any man's style as Carlyle's did those of Masson and Forster. There were, besides, plenty of traders

[1] Prior's *Life of Burke*, Bohn ed. p. 171.

[2] *John Ruskin*, in "Modern English Writers" series, pp. 17, 34. It is a pity to have to add that Mrs. Meynell is herself a blamably cumbrous writer, and that she discounts her verdict on Gibbon's style by the tone in which she speaks of him (p. 262) as one who "darkens the air of some eight hundred years with a squalid dust-storm of demolition." Comment is needless.

in machine-made phrase before his day. Still, there is no gainsaying the charge that his writing is inveterately mannered, heavily periwigged, ceremoniously affected, as it were always in court dress. I confess that when I have been living with it long it always makes me think of stuffed animals. A good style is one which puts the nerve of meaning, so to speak, in circuit with the perceiving sense; which searches for the idea, so to say, with the hand ungloved. Its movement should be as that of a man lightly clad, free in all his limbs, the life defining itself continuously to the watching eye. But Gibbon's is always in stays, in ruffles, in processional robes. He seems to wave his hand and take snuff, with the fore-finger cocked (as was actually his habit), at every sentence.

There is mannerism and mannerism. Johnson had a highly mannered style; but his manner had a certain massive force, like his figure; he has the moral benefit of his mostly sombre mood; and if he marks time with his fist, at least the fist is bare. Thus he is relatively tolerable where Gibbon soon sets us fidgeting or mechanically mimicking. It is as if the lethargy of his obese body, which gradually lost the power of locomotion, set him upon attaining a kind of inorganic expression, as of a highly articulated machine. You open the last volume at random, and find a sentence like this: "Before the introduction of trade, which scatters riches, and of knowledge, which dispels prejudice, the prerogative of birth is most strongly felt and most humbly acknowledged."[1] This is the final manner, the machine-turned style of the time when he was reputed unable to rise from his

[1] Ch. lxi: *Digression on the Family of Courtenay.*

knees after he had been rash enough to get down on them. It gives a new definiteness to the word "artificial." We are at the other pole from a style like Newman's, sensitive without tremor, easily natural as the stride of a staghound, saying things—wise or otherwise—at once with the simplicity of cultured talk and the charm of fine art; or a style like Cobbett's, masculine and muscular, like a strong young peasant stripped for the wrestling-ring. Most writers must be content to be somewhere on the way towards such models, their style moving with the business-like but elderly gait of Hallam, the breathless trot of Macaulay, the pre-occupied but unaffected shuffle of Grote, or the more self-conscious step of Dr. Gardiner. All of these modes of progression, however, are better than Gibbon's, which seems to carry an effigy in a show, and can neither stride nor spring.

But once more we must take him as we find him. He made his style as he built up his knowledge, in virtue of his idiosyncrasy. In his youth, writing French, he had the affectation of a rather invalid beau, carefully poising his cane and mincing as he goes. "Alas!" he writes of it in the Autobiography, "how fatal has been the imitation of Montesquieu!" It would have been well if he had not gone further and fared worse; for Montesquieu's only tic is his sententiousness, and even the conscious step of the beau is better than the inorganic progression invented in thought by the gentleman who has ceased to walk. But the great and ultimate fact is that with this taxidermic manner, stiffening as he goes, Gibbon has made the greatest of all historic journeys, wrought the greatest of all historic structures, and won the prize of architectonic art where men far more happily equipped have got nowhere. The style of

Newman is to the style of Gibbon as Hyperion to a mandarin; but weigh the *History of the Decline and Fall* against *The Arians of the Fourth Century,* and Hyperion's work is jerked into the void. Nay, weigh the *Autobiography* against the *Apologia,* and see which is worth the more in the coin of the ages.

And let us remember that, however we may make light of his manner to-day, Gibbon carried it with a perfect composure, no man making him ashamed. Nay, with that very style he achieved new literary effects, touching history for the first time with the light of a fine irony, and contriving in his notes to make erudition itself entertaining. This gift in turn was French; but in the sustained use of it, the steadfast pressure of the personality, lies the testimony to Gibbon's unshaken self-possession. He is even disappointing in the entire self-satisfaction with which he meets any company: not once does he seem excited by contact with a great celebrity, be it Voltaire himself. Nothing ever overthrew his self-possession, save the French Revolution. Then indeed he shrieked wildly, betraying the final infirmity of his moral basis like so many another—like Burke, like Coleridge, like some in our own day on a lesser perturbation. But as a man and as a writer, in all his relations with his friends and opponents, he was as well poised as any paladin or stoic; and, what is more, we cannot attaint his work through his style. The mandarin is in his own way the master of his material, and when we realise as much our derision of his manner is apt to seem a little cheap. In the skull of that flaccid little figure, for every purpose of retrospective judgment, there was casketed as imperturbable a spirit as ever constituted a statesman or a thinker, a great man's share of the all-fusing force

to which flesh is as wax, and mere temperamental grace as the charm of a child.

V.

Besides the co-ordinating and composing skill which we have been considering, two other essential factors went to make the success of the *Decline and Fall:* one being the judicial stability of the whole comment, the other the centrality of the subject. It was after many tentatives that he made his choice. Among his mooted themes were a life of Sir Walter Raleigh, a history of the Swiss Confederation (actually begun), and one of the expedition of Charles VIII into Italy. None of the three projects, however executed, could have placed him in the first rank of historians, because none had a European significance. The first, indeed, could not have been more than a minor work for him; and neither of the others could have strung his powers or challenged universal interest. The really great idea came to him, as he has told us—to quote the finer phrasing of the version which Sheffield did not give—"while the barefooted fryars were chanting their litanies in the temple of Jupiter," on the 15th of October, 1764. "My original plan," he goes on, "was confined to the decay of the City; my reading and reflection pointed to that aim; but several years elapsed, and several avocations intervened, before I grappled with the decline and fall of the Roman Empire."[1]

So that it needed the actual visit to Rome to give the inspiration, and long reflection to ripen the architectonic plan. No other theme could have so availed

[1] Murray's ed. p. 406.

for his fame. He had chosen the essential problem of European history, the keystone of its arch; and with his faculties, his learning, and his judgment, he was secure of the attention of the civilised world for his performance.

To attempt to assess its merits, where so many accomplished experts have given their verdict, would be presumptuous if we did not begin by using their light. But it may not be amiss to acknowledge first of all that the very deficiencies which leave a student desirous of another survey of the same field—to wit, the lack of sociological analysis and synthesis—are probably part of the secret of Gibbon's success. Even the great sociological effort he makes in the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters is not and could not be decisive, simply because sociology was in his day in its infancy. As it is, he has there achieved the first comprehensive treatment of the rise of Christianity as a natural phenomenon; and to make light of it is to exhibit the ordinary blindness either of religious prejudice or of the sentimentalism which it is apt to leave in ill-founded rationalists. No student who comes to it in a scientific spirit can fail to pay tribute to the original power and the sanity it reveals. Yet, since even that is but a first seizure of a great and complex problem, it must be improved upon like every other scientific beginning. If, however, Gibbon had sought to handle at once the economic and the intellectual problems of Roman decadence with the same deliberation, he would probably have yielded us much more imperfect seizures, because the economic science needed was not at all within his reach, and the literary attitude of his age was specially ill-suited to the grasp of the total relations. He would thus have left, not an artistic construction with a great scientific

sketch embedded in it, but a scientific work which must throughout be found inadequate after a generation or two. As it is, the construction is so spacious and on the whole so sound, on the simpler plane of historic narrative, that it can still satisfy and edify us.

The element of decay in most histories is either their defect in point of knowledge or the inadequacy of their theory of events. Gibbon had, for one thing, the luck to come to a great subject on which the possible information was for the most part collected, and, for another, the industry to master it all. On the other hand, he had either the prudence to shun the search for a theory which he could not compass, or the good fortune to be undisturbed by the need for theories. The latter, we may decide, is in the main the true explanation. Despite his interpretative success in one special field, on which he had long meditated, and in which he had the lead of Middleton, of Hume, and of Voltaire, he is not a sociologist. His criticism of Warburton's theory of the sixth book of the Æneid, by the admission of many students who have no love for Warburton, is pragmatically deaf to reasonable suggestions; and his latest hint of his own theory of Roman decline, put by way of an annotation on his own book, is quite superficial. Thus his abstention was not a matter of prudence. He has positively gained from his limitations; though there is evidence that his critical faculty, playing maturely on much in Montesquieu that had fascinated him in youth, distinctly warned him of the risks of a bias to explanation. When, therefore, I meet him in my dreams, and fantastically urge him to remedy his omissions, he always smiles wisely and takes snuff!

It is not, I think, a contradiction of the foregoing conclusion to repeat that, nevertheless, the effort of

the fifteenth chapter has been an essential element in Gibbon's intellectual importance. For, on the one hand, adequate sociology is a weightier thing than adequate narrative; and, on the other hand, the inadequacy of Gibbon's stroke of sociology has not yet been demonstrated by a better piece of work. For the student his *is* inadequate; but no one has yet superseded it. Nine-tenths of the censure passed upon it is the expression of far less competent thought.

Of the common line of censure one sample may here suffice. Sir M. E. Grant Duff, in the speech delivered by him as President of the Royal Historical Society and Chairman of the Gibbon Commemoration of 1894, thought fit to say of the historian that "undoubtedly his attitude to Christianity is the feature in his great work which has done most to diminish its influence; and all educated men, to whatever school they belong, would now admit with his masterly biographer, Mr. Cotter Morison, that this is a most serious blemish."[1] Let it be asked what "influence" Gibbon could have had as a historian but for his attitude to Christianity, and the nullity of the criticism will be evident. It was in that regard only that he can be held to *faire école*, as the French say; because it was there only that he rounded a sociological teaching; and it is largely on that score that he has remained permanently and massively interesting. Had he given an orthodox or conventional account of the rise of Christianity he would hardly have ranked otherwise than as a signally laborious and skilful compiler. The contrary judgment above cited, posited without a semblance of justification, comes from a distinguished dilettant, who in a

[1] Cited by General Meredith Read, in his *Historic Studies in Vaud, Berne, and Savoy*, ii, 287.

dozen volumes has done nothing durable for either history or criticism; yet his modest claim to express the views of "all educated men, to whatever school they belong"—a typical touch of the English critical method—suffices to "bluff" the bulk of our reading public.

A sufficient answer to such conventionalism is given by Professor Bury, whose title to speak for historical science, not to say "all educated men, to whatever school they belong," is hardly to be annulled by the *obiter dictum* of the ex-Governor-General of Madras. As Dr. Bury sums up in the introduction to his edition,

> 'Gibbon has his place in literature not only as the stylist .....but as the expounder of a large and striking idea in a sphere of intense interest to mankind, and as a powerful representative of certain tendencies of his age. The guiding idea or "moral" of his history is briefly stated in his epigram: "I have described the triumph of barbarism and religion." In other words, the historical development of human societies since the second century after Christ was a history of retrogression.....for which Christianity was mainly to blame.....We are thus taken into a region of speculation where every traveller must make his own chart. But to attempt to deny a general truth in Gibbon's point of view is vain, and it is feeble to deprecate his sneer.....All that has since been added to our knowledge of facts has neither reversed nor blunted the point of the *Decline and Fall*..... For an inquirer not blinded by religious prepossessions, or misled by comfortable sophistries, Gibbon really expounded one of the chief data with which the philosophy of history has to reckon.' Again: 'We need not hide the fact that Gibbon's success has in a large measure been due to his scorn for the Church.'[1]

Opinion for opinion, the expert's is rather the more convincing. But the essential rightness of Gibbon's

[1] Introduction cited, pp. xxxviii, xxxix.

conception of Christian beginnings is implied at once in the admissions of recent clerical students and in the attempts of some of them to make light of the service they avow. Says one of these :—

> The question which Gibbon asked when he proposed five causes for the spread of Christianity, first introduced *a new problem and a completely new method of treatment.* To suggest that the laws of cause and effect should be applied in the region of history, shocked the commonplace orthodoxy of the day, and has given rationalists a considerable amount of weak-minded pleasure.[1]

The strength of mind which petulantly imputes weakness to the rational pleasure taken in what is admittedly a new achievement in historical science, may be left to speak for itself. Of course, the clerical partisan goes on to repeat the pulpit aphorism that "God works through human and natural agencies"; but that formula is scientifically as void as the further suggestion that "Gibbon was too keen-sighted not to see the limitations of his own theory, and.....was probably quite sincere in speaking only of secondary causes." The very use of the expression "secondary causes" (though Gibbon diplomatically suggests by it the acceptance of a supernatural origin) amounted philosophically to a rejection of "first causes" from the whole historic field; and to assert that Gibbon "limited" his theory in the sense of seeing any more of "God" in Christianity than in any other historic process is to misstate the case. His intelligent contemporaries certainly and rightly saw only one of his "solemn sneers" in his observation that

> Some deities of a more recent and fashionable cast might soon have occupied the deserted temples of Jupiter and Apollo, if, in the decisive moment, the wisdom of Providence

[1] Rev. A. C. Headlam, art. on "Methods of Early Church History," in the *English Historical Review*, Jan. 1899, p. 13.

had not interposed a genuine revelation, fitted to inspire the most rational esteem and conviction, while at the same time it was adorned with all that could attract the curiosity, the wonder, and the veneration of the people.[1]

For the "insincerity" of such passages Christian intolerance has itself to thank; and though they prove that Gibbon's was not the heroic temper, their ironical method lies at the door of the Church which, insincere to the very heart, had always menaced open criticism with pains and penalties. Gibbon's meaning, all the while, was only too exasperatingly clear to his Christian readers. When he goes on to speak of the Christian miracles his irony is even less veiled. He had evidently no belief in a single supernatural item in the entire record, for his attitude to those he discusses implies his rejection of all. So far as it goes, then, his theory of the progression of Christianity is purely naturalistic. The critic last cited is ruffled by Renan's verdict that a man cannot write the history of a religion unless he has first believed it and then ceased to do so; and for his own part he lays it down that "the Church historian.....must have a calm and judicial and *believing* mind." The obvious answer is that such a mind can have no part in Gibbon's method. If, as the clerical critic insists, Christianity is "true," the principle of natural causation is dismissed, and we are back once more in the chaos of tradition and miracle from which Gibbon helped to effect our deliverance.[2]

[1] Ch. xv. Bohn ed. ii, 68.

[2] Circulation has been given (*Notes and Queries*, Sept. 10th, 1853) to part of a sentence of one letter of Gibbon's to his Aunt Hester, in which occur the words: "I consider Religion as the best guide of youth and the best support of old age." General Read, who quotes the letter, reluctantly concedes that it counts for little (ii, 281–3). Gibbon was in fact making himself agreeable, in his usual affectionate way, to his orthodox aunt; and there is not a grain of reason for believing that he ever recurred to her beliefs.

It is bare justice to him to say that the sociological study of Christian origins cannot do better than begin with his fifteenth chapter, which has weathered the criticism of four generations of prejudiced editors and critics, including the splenetic and short-sighted attack of Mr. Cotter Morison, a performance which has the distinction of doing less justice to the chapter in the name of positive science than has been done to it by some priests—for instance, the writer last cited. There can, indeed, be no better vindication of Gibbon's power and judgment than a strict confrontation of his great chapter with the typical hostile criticisms from first to last.

VI.

It is one of the chagrins of orthodoxy that while Gibbon's explanation of Christian origins is notably damaging, the replies have been notoriously ineffective. Macaulay, in the dressing-gowned freedom of his diary, puts the case with much point:—

> October 9. I picked up Whitaker's criticism on Gibbon. Pointless spite, with here and there a just remark. It would be strange if in so large a work as Gibbon's there were nothing open to just remark. How utterly all the attacks on his History are forgotten! this of Whitaker; Randolph's; Chelsum's; Davies's; that stupid beast Joseph Milner's; even Watson's. And still the book, with all its great faults of substance and style, retains, and will retain, its place in our literature; and this though it is offensive to the religion of the country, and really most unfair where religion is concerned. But Whitaker was as dirty a cur as I remember.[1]

This from a prudent but somewhat sentimental Nothingarian who thought Gibbon "really most unfair." We may leave Whitaker as sufficiently

[1] Trevelyan's *Life*, ch. xii, 1-vol. ed. pp. 544-5.

disposed of; noting that "poor Chelsum," as Gibbon called him, is on the other hand very gentlemanly, though dull; that Davis (whose name is misspelt by both Gibbon and Macaulay) was as fatuously insolent as Gibbon showed him to be; and that Milman, as Sir George Trevelyan notes, indicates concerning Milner an opinion like unto Gibbon's, but "in terms more befitting the pen of a clergyman." As he puts it: "In his answer to Gibbon, Milner unfortunately betrays the incapacity of his mind for historical criticism." In reality this applies to nearly all of Gibbon's Christian critics, even to the decorous and scrupulous Sir David Dalrymple, Lord Hailes, who laboriously found in the History some small flaws, and vainly imputed others.

Gibbon had in fact opened a new window on the historical field, and none of them would or could consent to see by it. Instead of making good the imperfections of the new survey by a more thorough use of its method, they spent themselves in demonstrating that the old survey through stained glass was the only true species of vision. Hailes had a real faculty for historic scrutiny where he was not prejudiced, and his sifting of Scottish history was perhaps the best work of the kind done in his day; but when it came to the religious problem, on which his mind and temper were made up, he could only cavil over minutiæ and frame *a priori* rebuttals to every hint that Christianity made its way by purely human means. It is the old story of anchylosis of the judgment—the weary summary of more than half the intellectual life of mankind. Faced by new truths which need the most candid attention to be understood, the most flexible adjustment of the thinking machine, so poor a thing at best, men grow rigid

with wrath at contradiction, and scan it with the rictus of spite in their eyes.

Only by the slow lapse of generations do the rigid machines get replaced by some more adaptable. The first signs of a general disposition to learn Gibbon's lesson appear in the edition of Milman, who in his Introduction expresses "the highest admiration as to his general accuracy," and admits that "it is astonishing how rarely we detect contradiction." Again, "Gibbon, it may be fearlessly asserted, is rarely chargeable even with the suppression of any material fact which bears upon individual character." No such praise, be it observed, can be given to *any* Christian historian who as such had hitherto dealt with the life of non-Christian antiquity. So much for the preliminaries of the dispute. Next comes the question whether any of Gibbon's gainsayers has shown a modicum of his rectitude. Milman himself, annotating the Autobiography, thought fit to speak in the professional tone of Gibbon's "bold and disingenuous attack on Christianity"; a fling mildly described by Dr. Bury[1] as "one of those futile charges which it would be impossible to prove and impossible to disprove—such imputations as are characteristic of historians in the heat of controversy, and may be condoned to politicians in the heat of electioneering, but in an historical critic are merely an impertinence."[2]

[1] In his Introduction, pp. xi–xii.

[2] Any man who might be concerned to be severe on Milman could with very good colour charge upon *him* a grave disingenuousness at more points than one. In his account of Marcus Aurelius (*History of Christianity*, B. II, c. vii) he not only calls him "a violent and intolerant persecutor," but asserts that "the general voice of Christian history arraigns" him "as withdrawing even the ambiguous protection of the former emperors, and giving free scope" to popular feeling against the Christians. From a historian of Christianity, this is something to remember. We have the explicit testimony of

When he seeks by argument to impugn the argument of Gibbon, Milman is more seemly but not more successful. His main position is that "Christianity proclaims its Divine Author chiefly in its first origin and development"; and he charges Gibbon with "confounding together in one indistinguishable mass the *origin* and *apostolic* propagation of the new religion with its later progress." For the rest, his case works down to an acceptance of Gibbon's verdict against ecclesiastical miracles from the second century onwards, with an insistence on the actuality of the miracles ascribed to Jesus and the Apostles.

For clear intelligences such as Hume's and Gibbon's, it had not needed the full establishment of the code of natural science to show that the latter position is untenable. They realised at once that the kind of minds which affirmed and the kinds of testimony

Tertullian (*Apol.* v) that Marcus decreed severe punishment against the unjust accusers of the Christians. This account Eusebius accepts without contradiction (*Hist. Eccles.* v, 5); and the leading Christian historian among Milman's modern predecessors, Mosheim, gives him small excuse for his perversion of the facts. Mosheim, indeed, in his rambling and incoherent discussion of the subject in the *De rebus Christianorum* (Saec. ii, § 15) says of Marcus that "neque satis videbatur Imperatori frena laxare hostibus Christianorum, quae parens eius iniecerat: addebat etiam edicta Christianis inimica"; but in a footnote he expressly retracts: "Manifestum est, ut arbitror, noluisse Imperatorem unius religionis caussa Christianos occidi, sed Antonini legem confirmasse." And in his later *Ecclesiastical History* (Cent. II, Pt. I, ch. i, § 2) he tacitly retracts everything, pronouncing both Antonines "models of excellence and benignity." Probably Milman copied the text of the *De rebus* without reading the notes, and without consulting the passage of Melito, transcribed by Eusebius (on a highly strained interpretation of which Mosheim founded his first charge), or the testimony of Tertullian, also cited by Eusebius. This is the most charitable view of the case, and it leaves the Dean poorly entitled to charge disingenuousness on Gibbon. It is but fair to add that his contemporary Dean Waddington, who had preceded him with a history of Christianity (*History of the Church*, 1833, p. 37), positively distorts Mosheim's words by way of bringing against Marcus a similar charge to Milman's, for which he gives Mosheim as his sole authority.

which vouched miracles in later times were exactly those which alleged and established them in the first century. Milman's thesis is the childish one that in an age in which all cults claimed miracles, and none scrutinised them, we are first to accept Christian prodigies and reject all others, and then to reject all post-apostolic Christian prodigies but stand firm to the earlier. It is under cover of such muddling compromises that reason makes its way among middling minds. To that dispensation we must submit; but it does not follow that the mediocracy of mind shall be left free to asperse their betters for being more candid of spirit and more clear of eye. There are, of course, always trimmers to encourage them; priests of the modern Pasht, the sacred Jumping Cat, who make it an offence in a pioneer to see the truth before the crowd are ready. To this day that spirit enters into criticism of Gibbon in unforeseen incarnations. But there remains to be met the continued resistance of prejudice, sentimental or fanatical.

None of the contemporary replies to Gibbon, I think, outlived the eighteenth century, with the slight exception of that of Bishop Watson, whose way of defending the faith was so lacking in the livelier signs thereof that he became suspect of Socinianism, and was denied further preferment, to his own unconcealed disgust. To avow an imperfect acquaintance with early church history and fall back on quaint common-sense guesses (such as that the sun was merely "obnubilated" at the crucifixion) by way of dodging the difficulties of miracles—this was not the way to rise in the church. As Gibbon notes, the blundering and incompetent Davis got a pension, and one or two other forgotten champions got livings, but the courteous Chelsum and the dignified Watson got

nothing. But still the attack went on. In 1820, Richard Carlile, learning that some of the London publishers proposed to issue an edition of the History without the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters, defeated that sagacious scheme by publishing them serially in his *Republican;* and no one, so far as I know, ever carried it out.[1] It became, however, the business of orthodox editors, since they might not suppress the bane, to supply an antidote. Hence much annotation, doing Gibbon little harm.

The reciprocal criticism of the editors, as it happened, was his security. A continuous flow of tranquil amusement is to be had by reading Gibbon in the Bohn edition with the variorum notes. Over the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters there are at least thirty distinct fights. The German and French editors, Wenck and Guizot, the latter especially, are chronically at him for some alleged fault of mind or matter; and the English editors, perhaps not unmoved by patriotism, usually contrive to show that Gibbon was partly or mainly or perfectly right and the foreigners more or less gratuitously wrong. Milman's churchmanship, and his own purpose of vindicating primitive Christianity, did not withhold him from a multitude of raps on the too Christian knuckles of M. Guizot, whom he might more economically have disposed of by summing up that he is often spiteful and generally mistaken.[2] Wenck, a good scholar, but unduly contentious, could compile an elaborate note to convict Gibbon of having understated "the

[1] There was, however, an edition by Bowdler, "with the careful omissions of all passages of an irreligious or immoral tendency." 5 vols. 1826.

[2] Guizot himself, in the preface to his revised translation, avows that Gibbon's critics "were far surpassed by him in information, acquirements, and talents." Yet he contrives to deserve the blame incurred by them.

revenue of the Roman Empire," when Gibbon had expressly spoken of the "income of the Roman provinces."[1] The Bohn editor, who reproduces such notes with grim fidelity, is never so happy as when supporting Milman against Guizot and Wenck, unless it be when he is showing that all three are at fault together. Among them, Gibbon comes off extremely well. The best of the fun is that the Bohn editor, "an English Churchman," has a special fury against all financial ecclesiasticism, and devotes countless declamatory notes to showing that "hierarchies" have been the ruin of all religion, Christian and pagan alike.[2]

The loss of all this chaste entertainment is the one drawback to the study of the masterly edition of Dr. Bury, which attends sternly to business, and leaves the wars of commentators to cold oblivion. In the lost old leisurely days, the commentator's chief joy was to quote the other commentators and prove them to be wrong: hence the Variorum Shakespeare in twenty-one large volumes—a mine of recreation to the bookworm, human or diabolic. And let us not sourly condemn them, for Gibbon himself shared their mood, stopping as he does to foot-note, in his first chapter, how "M. de Voltaire, tom. 14, p. 297,

[1] Ch. vi, pp. 205–6.

[2] For a churchman, the Bohn editor is notably impartial. In one note on ch. ii (Bohn ed. i, 39) and elsewhere (*e.g.*, ch. viii, p. 259) he presses vivaciously the economic motive as fundamental in the maintenance of the ancient cults; and later on (ch. xvi: vol. ii, p. 101) he gives the application: "The stream of sacred revenue had thus been cut off; and in such a case no religion, having the power, has ever failed to have recourse to persecution." Elsewhere (i, 53) he writes: "Modern writers have been too willing to flatter the pride of their contemporaries or the prejudices of their sect, by exaggerating their moral improvement under the benign influence of religion. It is to be wished that they could produce less vague and dubious proofs of what they assert."

unsupported either by fact or probability, has generously bestowed the Canary Islands on the Roman Empire";[1] and again to suggest: "See Templeman's Survey of the Globe; but I dispute both the doctor's learning and his maps." Who would forego such comments? and who would miss seeing Gibbon make an irrelevant reference in order to note that "Dr. Burnet (*Archæologia*, l. 2, c. 7) has discussed the first chapters of Genesis with too much wit and freedom"?[2] Nay, who would miss hearing Wenck, stung by Gibbon's praise of Hume and gibe at Bossuet and smile at Pope, hotly assert that monotheism was "the early fundamental principle of natural and revealed religion," and cite in proof "Pfanneri Systema Theologiæ Gentilis Purioris, cap. 2, 11, 13"?

If, however, we seek for anything solider than entertainment from the comments of the editors on the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters, we shall be hard pressed to find it. The old trouble is uncured: the critics set out with a false and fixed idea, that of the supernatural origin and success of Christianity, and they beat the air in their demonstrations. Guizot, unable to wait for the fifteenth chapter, jumps at a

[1] Elsewhere (ch. xlix: vol. v, p. 413) in a note on the Carlovingians, he refers the reader to various historians, "and even Voltaire, whose pictures are sometimes just, and always pleasing." He did not greatly appreciate his great contemporary (see the Journal, 1764, March 14th), though he praises *Tancrède* highly (vi, 157). In his Autobiography (Memoir B, p. 148) Gibbon speaks of his early "desire of beholding Voltaire, whom I then rated above his real magnitude." It has been stated (by the Rev. Peter Anton, *Masters in History*, 1880, p. 19) that "the Frenchman received the English youth in the coldest manner," but for this Gibbon gives no authority.

[2] After this, it is hard to take seriously the rebuke to Voltaire for his tragedy of *Mahomet*: "Some reverence is surely due to the fame of heroes and the religion of nations" (note to ch. l). Moslem scholars recognise Gibbon's merits, but it may be doubted whether they much prefer Gibbon's handling of the prophet to Voltaire's.

passage in the second, where Gibbon incidentally mentions that Roman slaves were mostly barbarian captives, to declare that it was this usage which made ancient wars so bloody, and that "by putting an end to the cruel institution of slavery, Christianity extended its mild influence to the practice of war." Nothing but religious obscurantism can account for so vain a thesis on the part of so able a man. Every student will to-day grant the counter thesis that the usage of enslavement was probably the first effectual check to massacre in war; and that the enslavement of captives remained the common practice for many centuries after the introduction of Christianity.[1] Still more perverse positions, however, follow, which the English editors could not but repudiate; and when in the sixth chapter Guizot is found snapping at Gibbon for not praising warmly enough the demi-semi-Christian Emperor Alexander Severus, and Wenck growling at him for drawing too bright a picture of that emperor's reign, his compatriots are again united in his defence. Guizot is headlong enough to denounce Gibbon for not mentioning in the sixth chapter details which he gives in their proper place in the sixteenth. There would seem to be a fatality of miscalculation among his antagonists.

The wisest thing done by Guizot is to leave the subject of miracles alone, beyond making the usual attempt to naturalise the darkness at the crucifixion: when he undertakes to be corrective he becomes disastrous to his cause. One of his earliest shots is the assertion that the first Christians were called Ebionites (*Ebionim*=poor) "on account of the poverty to which

[1] The great systematiser of Christian thought for the Church in the Middle Ages, Thomas Aquinas, if he wrote the *De Regimine Principum*, expressly justifies slavery on the score that the menace of it serves to make soldiers fight bravely. Treatise cited, ii, 10.

their charities had reduced them "—a theory of which the single merit is that, from the heterodox point of view, it brightens the subject. More than once he repeats a bad cavil of Davis without noticing Gibbon's reply; and at times he commits exploits of textual perversion which the English editors have either overlooked or thought it fit to ignore. A series of head-shakes from them, however, marks the devout Frenchman's path: "unfortunate," "irrelevant," "mistaken," "uncandid," are their normal verdicts on his apologetics. And they themselves, in turn, do little or nothing to controvert Gibbon in historical essentials. They can but fall back on the charge, sometimes put with asperity, sometimes with moderation, that he does not do justice to the evidence for supernatural influence and abnormal virtue, and does not show a proper sympathy with the martyrs. Apart from the more just objection that his frequent sarcasm is not in the true historical spirit, this is the gist of the case against Gibbon to-day.

As to the supernaturalism it is no longer necessary to argue. When clerical cyclopædias are fain to deal with Jesus on Unitarian lines, the real debate lies elsewhere. In point of fact, indeed, much of the non-supernaturalist exposition of Christism to-day is in the spirit of supernaturalism, though it has abandoned the name and the thesis. Instead of a man born of a virgin, supernaturally revived after death and visibly removed from the earth into space, we are asked to conceive of a man who suddenly introduced into a decadent world a set of ideas and precepts which speedily altered, once for all, its whole moral dynamics. As, however, the full refutation of this fantasy takes us away from Gibbon, who did not dispute the historicity of Jesus, we need on his behalf

concern ourselves merely with the charges of injustice and antipathy to the early Christians.

To answer merely that he *did* exhibit a certain unscientific animus, howbeit by way of irony, would be accurate, but would not be to hold the balances fairly between him and his opponents. It has to be remembered that those who, in his day and ours, have charged him with want of sympathy and want of spiritual insight, themselves show an indurated incapacity for sympathy with ninety-nine hundredths of the human race in the past. The sympathy so profusely bestowed on the supposed characters of the first Christians is normally given in terms of a hard aversion to everybody else around them. To indict all paganism as a mass of corruption, to vilify it as religion in terms of the worst phenomena of its decadent ages, to deny goodness and elevation of feeling to all who would not be Christians, to represent all Jewry as made up of odious Pharisees, stupid Scribes, and heartless Sadducees—this has been as regular a function of Christian apologetics, from De Mornay to Dean Farrar, as the vituperation of unbelievers. To this day it is exceptional to find a Christian or even a Positivist writer who recognises the moral parity of early Christism with much of the surrounding Hellenism : Dr. Edwin Hatch, who did so, had even less preferment than Watson ; and I could cite some professed rationalists who have never fully delivered themselves from the prepossessions set up by Christian declamation and Christian art.

Gibbon, then, reacted against a habit of stolid injustice ; and he finally seems, perhaps, more moved by antipathy than he really was because of the resort to sarcasm that was forced on him by Christian bigotry. Had he been free to state his case straight-

forwardly and seriously, his more favourable estimates might have stood free of the suspicion of irony that now attaches to every laudatory passage in his two chapters. Doubtless the time will come when, the old fanaticism being fully discredited, his sarcasm will be felt to be beside the case; and then, without any disparagement of his judgment relatively to his period, the time will have come to supersede him—if the required operator is ready.

VII.

Meantime, his irony has still a work to do, and it will never be put out of court by the mere disguised fanaticism which impugns it as malicious injustice. Macaulay's "most unfair" echoes his friend Milman's charge without sustaining it. Presumably the strongest case that can be made on that charge is the one drawn up by Mr. Cotter Morison, who had the inspiration of later scholarship and sociology than were available to Milman. Let us then consider his indictment. Thus it begins:—

> Gibbon's account of the early Christians is vitiated by his narrow and distorted conception of the emotional side of man's nature. Having no spiritual aspirations himself, he could not appreciate or understand them in others. Those emotions which have for their object the unseen world and its centre, God, had no meaning for him; and he was tempted to explain them away when he came across them, or to ascribe their origin and effects to other instincts which were more intelligible to him. The wonderland which the mystic inhabits was closed to him; he remained outside of it, and reproduced in sarcastic travesty the reports he heard of its marvels.[1]

It must have taken some nervous effort to work up the last metaphor in particular. What it means it

[1] *Gibbon*, p. 122.

would be brutal to ask; but it is necessary to warn the ingenuous reader that it has no intelligible bearing on the case. "Mystics," including mystics *manqués* like Mr. Morison, are really not the abstruse natures they suppose themselves to be; and the proof of it may at any time be had by putting a few of different tribes together. The amenity with which each contemns the others and their "marvels"—the Catholic the Protestant's, the Buddhist the Christian's, and the Christian the pagan's—is an index of the value of their joint scorn for the rationalist. A sane man, a rationalist, duly attentive to morbid psychology, may understand them well enough, which is more than they can attain to in regard to him, whether he be the *a priori* rationalist, as Hegel, or the *a posteriori*, as Gibbon. And the phenomena of early Christianity, so far as they can now be traced, are perfectly familiar, and normally intelligible, to all who have thoughtfully looked into modern Salvationism, or Sufism, or Babism, or Hinduism, or Buddhism, or Mormonism, or "Christian Science."

The common types of primitive Christian, as they are to be gathered from the New Testament writings, were (1) the simple Messianist, looking for either a new kingdom on earth or an end of things opening on a new life somewhere in the skies; (2) the more thoughtful or more practical, who sought to find the kingdom in a community within the community; (3) the imaginative fetishists, who believed themselves brought into communion with the supernatural by the magic rite of the Eucharist and by prayer, or by the hysterical *glossolalia*, a species of alienation. The two latter types approximated to the first in a common belief in a hereafter; and on the bases of all three there was evolved (4) the legalist or Pauline Christian,

who proceeded by a technical argument from faith in the covenant with Abraham to faith in the redemption through Jesus. Lastly came (5) the Judæo-Gentile philosopher who related the Christian apparatus to the cosmic conception of the Logos. All believed in miracles and evil spirits; all looked on pagan "idolatry" with fear and hatred; all were more or less capable of fanatical malice, by force of their exclusiveness; all were to be matched by the hundred among the orthodox Jews, and, apart from their bigotry, among the mystery-cultivating Pagans.

The secret of such resentment as Mr. Morison's lies in the clinging to Milman's notion that the *first* Christians were a wholly or fundamentally different set of people from the later; that those of the Catacombs were saints and those of Constantinople sinners—a conception as disintegrating to orthodoxy in the end as it is unmanageable to sociology. True, the State establishment at once brought to the church swarms of worldlings, bent on pelf; and, though already worldly types had become prominent in the third century, the earlier converts were relatively disinterested. But that does not mean that they were saints. The first Christians are supposed to have been, almost without exception, loving, blameless, forgiving, utterly unselfish. Such an inference can be framed and held only in virtue of a dumb defiance of all the evidence. In the Gospels, we have the disciples from time to time represented as jealous and self-seeking, stupid, unsympathetic, and traitorous. Either there were such disciples or there were gospel-makers who spitefully invented them or libelled them. In the Synoptics, Jesus is made alternately to preach love and racial separation, unlimited forgiveness and prompt punishment, a universal fatherhood of God

and a dispensation of hell-fire. You are taught to love your enemies and loathe the Scribes and Pharisees and stand aloof from the Samaritans. Even in the Fourth Gospel Jesus at times disputes bitterly and egotistically: the Logos becomes an angry priest. In the Acts we have Peter miraculously murdering Ananias and Sapphira for a falsehood venial in comparison with the treason ascribed (doubtless later) to himself in the Gospels. In the epistles we find Paul[1] alternately preaching love and shrieking anathema at variant doctrine; and there too are pictured believers who commit incest in the name of Christian freedom, go to law with each other before heathen judges, and drink too much and go to sleep over the Eucharist itself. In the Apocalypse we have fresh allusion to backslidings, and a fulmination of "hate" against an antinomian sect.

So far from being unjust to such phases of faith, Gibbon is positively over-lenient in that he does not track them. A just induction would consist in noting the variations and inferring that at all times there were *some* who had the natural gift of love and serene devotion, never wholly perverted by zealotry. But there were presumptively such in many pagan cults; and there were surely some such even in the ages of Christian schism and dogmatic insanity. Nay, are there not presumptively such among the Moslems[2] and the Mormons? Gibbon, passing with light irony over the conventional picture, did not impugn it as he might, but all the while set up a fair counter-suggestion to the view that the primitive Christian constituted the sole salt of an evil earth.

[1] That is, if we take the "four" epistles as genuine.

[2] See in Mr. Morel's *Affairs of West Africa* (1902, p. 222) an account of a Moslem missionary who, by patient endurance of injury, won over an African tribe to his faith.

What happened in the period of a socially prosperous Christianity was simply, as aforesaid, the accession of multitudes of more worldly or less zealous cast; but even with those multitudes there would come the better types, docile and serene or humble souls who went naturally with the household or the mass, and were kindly and credulous under any creed. The worst features of Christian history, antinomianism and fanaticism, licence and strife, are traceable in the very earliest documents. They are just as intelligible as anything else in history—intelligible as expressions of the ordinary, unwise, headstrong, credulous, self-asserting human being. Mr. Morison's blast is simply so much rhetoric. His assertion that "the simple-hearted emotions of God-fearing men were a puzzle and an irritation" to Gibbon, proves finally only this, that the processes of rational analysis were apt to be a puzzle and an irritation to himself.

It is true that he proceeds, though with every show of a foregone conclusion, to debate Gibbon's sociological theses as such. Gibbon, he contends, "puts effects for causes," as if an effect cannot also be a cause. "The zeal produced the effects alleged, but what produced the zeal?" he asks; and to the remark that it was "derived from the Jewish religion" he retorts that nothing is said by Gibbon to show why Gentiles of every race should "derive from a despised race tenets and sentiments which would make their lives one long scene of self-denial and danger." A quiet explanation may suffice to supersede this and some further convulsive polemic.

1. Gentiles had already become Jewish proselytes in considerable numbers before the Christian period. They were moved in the same way as Romans were moved to adopt the rites of Isis and Osiris, deities

also of a "despised race,"[1] or as the Roman army was moved to adopt Mithraism, the cult of the Cilician pirates, and also of the Persian enemy. Such phenomena are common in ancient religion; and there is nothing more remarkable in one case than in the others. Gibbon expressly specifies the nature of the attraction in the Judæo-Christian cult.

2. The converts did *not,* save in a minority of cases, look forward to "one long scene of self-denial and danger." They did not count on perpetual persecution; and when persecution came, numbers always lapsed. If a number did eagerly face persecution, they were doing what was to be done later by Babîs and Mormons. As for self-denial, that has been a cult with some of every race in every age: before or apart from Christianity there were zealous ascetics in Egypt, in Syria, in India, in Mexico. In Mr. Morison's own words, the ascetic temper is "one of the most widely manifested in history." Yet he triumphantly demands, "Whence arose the sudden blaze of conviction" seen among the Christians? The answer is that such phenomena constantly go with forms of religious belief, and that Gibbon really did not doubt that Christian believers believed.

3. Mr. Morison proceeds to argue that the ascetic temper was beyond Gibbon's "comprehension." It is really just as comprehensible as any other temper; and Mr. Morison is badly at fault when he says that Gibbon, "with a strange ignorance of the human heart, attributes the austere morals of *the* early Christians to their care for their reputation." Gibbon

[1] It is now well known that the adoption of deities of conquered and despised races by their conquerors is an almost universal feature of early religion. See Mr. Gomme's *Ethnology in Folklore,* 1892, ch. iii.

distinctly specifies two motives, "repentance for their past sins," and concern for the reputation of "their society"—a very different doctrine from that put in his mouth by Mr. Morison. A critic who undertakes to sit in judgment on Gibbon should be more careful to realise what he reads.

4. It is not clear whether Mr. Morison really believed in miracles; but he writes that Gibbon "seems to think that the claim of supernatural gifts somehow had the same efficacy as the gifts themselves would have had, if they had existed." This is exactly what took place, as regarded the making of converts to the faith. If Mr. Morison could not "comprehend" this, he was critically deficient in a degree never approximated to by Gibbon.

5. Mr. Morison is still more at fault when he represents that Gibbon "attributes to the scepticism of the pagan world the easy introduction of Christianity." Gibbon really argues that the discrediting of the simpler ethnic religions prepared the way for a new in terms of the common "necessity of believing." Mr. Morison (who in his comments suppresses the context of what he quotes) has presumably missed the point, which is that the old civic cults had to be out of fashion before universalist cults could make general headway. A more just objection is to the effect that Gibbon does not fully recognise ("was evidently unaware of" are the critic's words) "the striking religious revival which uplifted paganism in the age of Hadrian and grew with the sinking empire." It is true, as Mr. Morison urges, that Gibbon does not take note of the pressures of misery and life-weariness in driving men to cults which promised a future state; but this is a constant aspect of his narrative, and is in no way special to his treatment of Christianity; and he

expressly specifies as constant the play of all forms of superstition, and the projection of "hopes and fears beyond the limits of the visible world."[1]

To the last, then, the specifically hostile criticism of Gibbon fails seriously to discredit him; and it nearly always tends to discredit itself. A student who desires to profit by what Gibbon has achieved may easily do more to supplement him than has been done by Mr. Morison, with Comte and Hausrath behind him. Where Gibbon fell short was in not tracing (1) the effect of despotism in driving men who were debarred from the active life of self-government, with its simpler religious usages, to the intenser and more polemic religious life which partially compensated for social passivity; and (2) in failing to realise the *economic* causation that underlay the phenomena of ecclesiastical evolution. Such omissions are excusable for Gibbon's time, but hardly so is the entire disregard of the ecclesiastico-economic process seen in the comment of Mr. Morison. He was really at a point of view not more scientifically sociological than Gibbon's own.

For the comparison is entirely in Gibbon's favour when we consider the problem of Christian evolution as a whole. What he clearly saw was that the rise of Christianity went step for step with the decay of civilisation, and that its triumph involved the reign of barbarism. This Mr. Morison would not see. Following Comte, in the spirit of Comtist prescription rather than in that of sociological science, he conventionally treats Christian history as one of continuous progress; and, coming to Julian, he is delighted to think that Gibbon saw in the hapless emperor "pitiful superstition, huge vanity, weak affectation." Such is the

[1] Ch. ii and xv. Bohn ed. i, 38; ii, 67–68.

measure meted to the anti-Christian mystic by the champion of the mystic temperament. Conscious of being nobly impartial, he grants to Julian some "real merits," but proclaims that "a certain intellectual disdain for the reactionary emperor is difficult to avoid." Such intellectual disdain, which he avows in professing to avoid it, is exactly the temper he thought he found in Gibbon, and so hotly denounced as the manifestation of a narrow and distorted temperament. The truth is that in Mr. Morison it is not so much intellectual as sectarian.

To call the reforming Julian reactionist, and by implication to make Gregory the Great progressive, is to make fanaticism pass for evolutionary science; but that is only half of the critic's sin against light. Julian was a mystic if ever one lived; but because his mysticism, his "wonderland," was another zone than that of the creed in which Mr. Morison had dreamed, his "marvels" are "pitiful superstition," his humorous affectation is "weak," his boyish and innocent vanity is "huge." Such is the range of sympathy in some who claim to be monopolists of it; such the equity of a critic who pronounces Gibbon lop-sided and unjust; such the sociology of one who finds Gibbon's vein of remark on Christianity "completely out of date."

Once more we find the priest juster than the Positivist. It is the Bohn editor who writes at the close of the twenty-third chapter:—

> Sensitiveness to the acrimony with which his fifteenth and sixteenth chapters had been assailed, made Gibbon cautious here. So far did he carry this, that recent editors, who in republishing his History undertook to correct all that he had mis-stated respecting Christianity, have raised no objection to any part of the present chapter. If he has erred, it has been rather by sometimes doing injustice to the imperial mystic. There are instances of his having wrongly supposed

> Christians at large to have been the objects of vindictive feelings and coercive measures which were directed only against the priesthood.....That he [Julian] wished by gentle and more persuasive convictions to win the laity, and first the educated portion of them, is clearly evident from the fragments which we possess of what he wrote against their faith.

And that is the bare fact.

VIII.

The quality in Gibbon's character that, with his special rationalistic training, gives such solidity to his fifteenth chapter, is in one or other aspect really present throughout his work. Dr. Bury has well summed up his capital virtue as a historian in the remark that the *Decline and Fall,* the greatest of modern histories, is noticeably devoid of enthusiasm. This is apt to sound a damaging compliment; and Mr. Cotter Morison is within his rights when he puts it that "his cheek rarely flushes in enthusiasm for a good cause." On deep reflection it must be granted that a historian of whom this can be said is probably deficient in his realisation of much of his subject-matter. But it must also be avowed that there is a compensation when we can say of Gibbon, what is scarcely predicable of Mr. Morison, that he never—in his History at least—flushes on behalf of a bad cause. And even Mr. Morison makes amends for some perverse criticism by this final and judicial appraisement of Gibbon's total performance:—

> If.....the historian, forsaking his high function and austere reserve, succumbs to the temptations that beset his path, and turns history into political pamphlet, poetic rhapsody, moral epigram, or garish melodrama, he may become conspicuous to a fault at the expense of his work. Gibbon avoided these seductions. If the *Decline and Fall* has no superior in historical literature, it is not solely in consequence

of Gibbon's profound learning, wide survey, and masterly grasp of his subject. With wise discretion, he subordinated himself to his task. The life of Gibbon is the less interesting, but his work remains monumental and supreme.

This tribute fully presents the abiding value of Gibbon's view of things. His lack of enthusiasm left him, to use the modern phrase, finely "objective." Historic enthusiasms, like historical philosophies, are precarious things: it is so nearly certain that our enthusiasms will not be entirely shared by the next inquirer; and if we hold to them we must take the hazard. Gibbon's insusceptibility left him a juster judge than any historian of the enthusiastic type can well be; and his coolness further saved him from the common snare of his craft, recognised by Milman in his remark on the astonishing rarity of contradiction in Gibbon's pages. It needs, perhaps, some critical acquaintance with a number of historians to make one realise how high a praise that is; but to Milman's words may be added the remark that not only does Gibbon nearly escape self-contradiction: he rarely forgets what he has written. In all his History I recall only one repetition: it is a note on Cosmas Indicopleustes, of which the substance is given twice over—on the fortieth and on the forty-seventh chapters.[1]

Now, the student of (for instance) Finlay, whom Mr. Morison praises as "the judicious," knows that that very thoughtful writer not only forgets in one volume what he has said in another, but repeats particular passages in one chapter,[2] and recurs to his generalisations, as often contradicting as repeating them, in a way that shows he had no coherent view

[1] Bohn ed. iv, 319; v. 259.
[2] *E.g.* a textual repetition on pp. 6 and 22 of vol. vi, ed. Tozer.

either of his book or of his theories. He is at all times interesting and suggestive in his interpretations of historic movement; but he is so frequently and so radically self-contradictory that after a time no student can follow him without an invincible distrust. At the same time he exhibits to the full the danger from which Gibbon, as we have noted, escaped in virtue of his developing distaste for speculation—the danger of explaining historic processes in terms of impermanent theories, economic and sociological. Such work cannot endure. A zealous student may reach more scientific views by habitually analysing Finlay and weighing his contradictions against each other; but the labour is one that few will undertake. The work must be done over again; it is too inconsistent to last.[1]

Such shortcomings, up to a certain point, may indeed be excused in a writer who lacks leisure; but Finlay had about as much leisure as Gibbon. His failing is organic: one seems to realise it at once on seeing his portrait, with the high brow and the dreaming eyes. He has more faculty of reflection than of recollection; the speculative bent overbalances the sceptical, and can visibly lead him off obliviously on a new theoretic trail at any moment; he lacks at once the force of will which should control the musing habit, and the clear view of realities which should save him from inconsistency. Another gifted writer of our own time, John Richard Green—in whom beauty of character is so marked that to criticise him is an effort—serves as an illustration of the risks both of the enthusiastic mood and of the bias to generalisation.

[1] I have noted some of Finlay's series of self-contradictions in *An Introduction to English Politics*, pp. 85–86, 110–111. Many more could be adduced from his seven volumes.

Green indeed had never a fair share of leisure, but his theoretic contradictions are not to be accounted for like his mistakes and repetitions, by the pressures of his task on his time. His series of irreconcilable dicta on the Lollards,[1] and on the characters of Teutons and Celts, English and Irish;[2] his three incompatible theories of the fall of feudalism[3]—such inconsistencies are proofs of a certain critical infirmity. In Green as in Finlay we get suggestiveness at the price of incoherence and error. Gibbon never matches their lapses of memory, and if he leaves us to theorise for ourselves he seldom wastes our time by offering us false clues, and still seldomer gives us a false fact.

Mr. James Bryce, in his very interesting obituary notice of Green,[4] draws up a graded table of modern historians in terms of their accuracy. In the highest grade are put Thirlwall and Ranke; in the second Gibbon and Carlyle; then Grote, some way below whom the Professor places Green, on a level with Macaulay and Robertson; while "decidedly" below these are ranked Milman and Hume. It is a curiously suggestive list, drawn by a very competent hand; and it is not for me to venture to challenge it, beyond contending that Gibbon makes a much wider and harder research, and has surely fewer notable miscarriages, than Carlyle. But in any case the adjudication will help us to realise what the merit of accuracy means, provided that we remember the scope of Gibbon's work in comparison with Thirlwall's, the immense variety of his detail, and the weight of his

[1] Noted in *The Dynamics of Religion*, pp. 18–21.
[2] Discussed in *The Saxon and the Celt*, pp. 221–233.
[3] See pp. 243, 279, 282, and 295 of the original edition of the *Short History*.
[4] *Macmillan's Magazine*, 1892.

thought in comparison with Ranke's ;[1] provided also that we remember what an ordeal of scrutiny Gibbon has undergone in comparison with those others.

For the rest, his non-enthusiasm preserved him from the bias, noble but unjudicial, that partly deflects the fine historic vision of Grote ; his rationalism saved him alike from the occasional theologic absurdity of Hallam, and the Christian prejudice of Guizot ; and of the grotesque racial animus of Motley and Mommsen he was incapable. Ranke in comparison is but an annalist ; Motley, aiming higher, fails utterly to maintain critical enthusiasm at the level set by Froude, who pronounced him to possess eminently "all the essentials of a great writer" ;[2] and even so solid a student as Bishop Stubbs exhibits a chronic vertigo of critical vacillation which reminds us how uncommon is Gibbon's steady balance of mind. Bishop Thirlwall, perhaps, best compares with him in solidity of judgment and firmness of grasp ; and Thirlwall is as inferior to Gibbon in artistic breadth and variety of presentment as to Grote in command of interest. For the fact remains that Gibbon, with all his full-dress mannerism, is still one of the most interesting of all historians : the mandarin style has more colour and character than the episcopal ; and the man of the world, with his ironies and his levities, his range of allusion, and his endless asides by way of footnotes, has the more intimate tone of humanity. So much does it take to

[1] A French critic has gone so far as to dub Ranke *le Capefigue allemand*—a characterisation more telling to-day than it would have been forty years ago, when Capefigue was popular. But it is perhaps obscure for the large contemporary multitude who do not read Capefigue at all.

[2] *Westminster Review*, April, 1856, cited by Dr. Moncure Conway, introd. to Bohn ed. of Motley's *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, 1896, i, p. xxxv.

build a great repute; and so rare is the combination of gifts that yields a perdurable masterpiece.

I shall not be accused, I believe, of lack of sympathy with Buckle; but the task of minutely revising the pages of that favourite author has brought home to me the full force of Mr. Bury's remark about enthusiasm. Buckle abounds in enthusiasm: he writes with the litten eye; and there is no question about the flush on his cheek for good causes. But this very enthusiasm, carrying him in a rapture of conviction into and over regions of speculation and generalisation on which Gibbon would never have ventured, brings it about that he falls into positive error, not only of argument and inference but of concrete statement, thrice for Gibbon's once. Here we have at last the sociological historian—for Buckle is the first who fully deserves the name—with an outfit as ample as his energy and his zeal; and his performance is a great achievement, which none of his detractors has come near rivalling. It will surely not soon die. And yet when we compare its substance with that of Gibbon's, matter for matter and manner for manner, setting the non-mannered, nondescript nineteenth-century style against the mannered eighteenth, the flushed cheek against the slow smile, and the bounding declamation against the posed epigram, we realise anew the sagacity which underlay Gibbon's general abstention from sociological interpretation. Buckle's monument, so to speak, contains much sterling silver and veins of fine gold; but that it will cohere as well as the fused bronze of Gibbon, who shall venture to predict? He will stimulate as Gibbon never did; he opens up a new field of science; his very taking of risks is a challenge to our admiration and a spur to our thought; but there the fact stands: the solidity

of Gibbon's result is vindicated anew by its juxtaposition with this more inspired and less guarded enterprise.

IX.

When we have thus at least partially recognised the power and plenitude of Gibbon's performance, we may venture, albeit still diffidently, to estimate his deficiencies. I have said that they substantially lie on the side of his sociology, his entire theory of things. He is open, indeed, to challenge at a good many points in respect of his mere use of his authorities, which is apt to be arbitrary when they clash, and variable on the side of scepticism. A new sense of the dubiety of history comes to us at times on comparing his text with his notes: he will calmly avow that he has put together from conflicting accounts what seems to him a likely narrative, leaving it tolerably clear that his sense of symmetry has been one of his standards; and anon we find him taking without question some staggering record from a witness long after the event, where doubt would be as natural as belief. It is not that he is credulous: on many points, such as the numbers slain in battles, he is normally and soundly critical; but his scepticism follows no rule, and leaves us asking for canons. Here, however, he is not only abreast of the best historiography of his own day: he is on a level with all but the most critical work of ours. Men still write history in the spirit of the bone-setter's "right or about right"; and when all is said, the most critical has cause to admit with Dr. Gardiner that he does but relate things as they seem to him to have happened. It is therefore to the problem of explanation, of the tracing of causation,

that we must come in the end, and it is over that that we are moved to pronounce Gibbon's performance inadequate.

And yet even on that side we shall misjudge him if we do not realise that he was not backward for his day, and that indeed his scepticism at times keeps him on the line of sound historical philosophy where later enthusiasms have gone astray. One of Mr. Morison's complaints against him is that he is not at all enthusiastic for Charlemagne: it is, the critic says, "perhaps the only instance in his work where he has failed to appreciate a truly great man, and the failure is the more deplorable as it concerns one of the most truly great men who have ever lived."[1] As usual, Mr. Morison does not judicially argue the point, but assumes to settle it by a dictum. "Properly considered," he declares, "the eighth century is the most important and memorable which Europe has ever seen"; and he uncandidly quotes some of Gibbon's lighter ironies without once noting his weighty impeachment of the conventional verdict. It was not lightly that Gibbon chose to counter a panegyric in which, even in his day, there had been joined the voices of Voltaire, Montesquieu, Mably, and Robertson. Let us note his graver words on the great emperor:—

> His *real* merit is doubtless enhanced by the barbarism of the nation and the times from which he emerged; but the *apparent* magnitude of an object is likewise enlarged by an unequal comparison; and the ruins of Palmyra derive a casual splendour from the nakedness of the surrounding desert.....I shall be scarcely permitted to accuse the ambition of a conqueror; but in a day of equal retribution..... the four thousand five hundred Saxons who were beheaded

[1] *Gibbon*, p. 162.

on the same spot would have something to allege against the justice and humanity of Charlemagne.....His military renown must be tried by the scrutiny of his troops.....but the two heroes who preceded Charlemagne bequeathed him their name, their examples, and the companions of their victories.....his campaigns are not illustrated by any battle of singular difficulty and success ; and he might behold with envy the Saracen trophies of his grandfather.....He wished to improve the laws and the character of the Franks ; and his attempts, however feeble and imperfect, are deserving of praise ; the inveterate evils of the times were suspended or mollified by his government [*Note.*—Yet Schmidt, from the best authorities, represents the interior disorders and oppression of his reign] ; but in his institutions I can seldom discover the general views and immortal spirit of a legislator who survives himself for the benefit of posterity. The union and stability of his empire depended on the life of a single man ; he initiated the dangerous practice of dividing his kingdom among his sons ; and after his numerous diets the whole constitution was left to fluctuate between the disorders of anarchy and despotism. His esteem for the piety and knowledge of the clergy tempted him to intrust that aspiring order with temporal dominion and civil jurisdiction. .....His law enforced the imposition of tithes, because the demons had proclaimed in the air that the default of payment had been the cause of the last scarcity.

And then, finally :—

Perhaps, in his expeditions beyond the Rhine and Elbe, he aspired to save his monarchy from the fate of the Roman Empire, to disarm the enemies of civilised society, and to eradicate the seed of future emigrations. But it has been wisely observed that in a light of precaution all conquest must be ineffectual unless it could be universal ; since the increasing circle must be involved in a larger sphere of hostility.[1]

Beside this deadly cumulation of rebuttal, Mr. Morison's page of declamation simply disappears.

[1] Ch. xlix, Bohn ed. v, 404-413. The last comment avowedly follows Gaillard.

He has not so much as glanced at the essential problem, on which Gibbon so weightily pronounces. To-day, I believe, even the balance of votes is with Gibbon. Schmidt[1] in Gibbon's own day had argued that the collapse of civilisation after Charlemagne was due to his imperialism; Lappenberg[2] later put him below Alfred as a constructor and healer; Sismondi put him below Otto;[3] Guizot pronounced his whole attempt "belle, mais stérile";[4] Frédéric Morin, one of the most penetrating minds of the French republican reaction against the school of Guizot, pronounced the empire of Charlemagne "a monstrous and inefficacious unity, the barbarous copy of the corruption of old Rome";[5] Hallam, while leaning to the general eulogy, decided that the son Louis, who passes for a weakling, was as a legislator superior to his father;[6] Seignobos points to the fatal division of power between the spiritual and the temporal arms, the bishops and the clergy, as the characteristic and disastrous work of the Karolings; and says for Karl's over-rated educational policy only that the effort was "not entirely lost."[7] Against these critical verdicts, those of patriotic Germans like Menzel and Gregorovius, of whom the first[8] called Charlemagne the sun of the new day of the Middle Ages, and the second[9] figured him as "the Moses of the Middle Ages, who had happily led mankind through the wilderness of barbarism," are not impressive. They simply ignore

[1] *Geschichte der Deutschen*, 1785, i, 471–5.
[2] *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, Eng. trans. 1845, ii, 43, 83.
[3] *Histoire des républiques italiennes*, ed. 1826, i, 85–91.
[4] *Essais sur l'histoire de France*, 7e édit. p. 238.
[5] *Origines de la démocratie*, 3e édit. 1865, Intr. p. 95.
[6] *Middle Ages*, ed. 1885, i, 15.
[7] *Histoire de la Civilisation*, ed. 1893, i, 405–10.
[8] *Geschichte der Deutschen*, Cap. 103.
[9] *Geschichte der Stadt Rom*, B. v, K. i, § 2.

the eclipse of civilisation for two centuries after the hero.

Mr. Bryce, who takes their tone, admits that after Charlemagne "the mass dissolved into that chaos out of which it had been formed," and gives no evidence for his countervailing claims; any more than for his repetition of the old fable that the emperor was "of strength and stature almost superhuman," and that as his activity "made him the conqueror of Europe, so was it by the variety of his culture that he became her civiliser."[1] Mr. Bryce, who puts Gibbon in the second rank of historians for accuracy, might have learned from Gibbon that Gaillard determined the hero's height at 6ft. 1¼inch English measure; and that Eginhard's testimony clearly shows him to have begun to learn to write in mature age, and not to have succeeded.[2] One hesitates to say it, but Mr. Bryce here falls for a moment below Gibbon's standard of accuracy and research.

The important point, however, is that Gibbon in this matter realised and hinted the futility of imperialism as a factor of civilisation. Where the Christian Menzel decides that Christianity could not triumph save by massacre, and that massacre was accordingly right, the sceptic points to the speedy collapse of the imperial house of cards, and the evocation of centuries of ferocious heathen retaliation on the Christianised countries as a result of Karl's frightful ravages among the Saxons. The time has come, I think, when even Christians may begin to realise that barbarism, *pace* the Comtist, is not best to be transmuted into civilisation by the bludgeon.

[1] *The Holy Roman Empire*, 8th ed. pp. 71–74.

[2] Bohn ed. v, 407. Compare Hallam's note of 1848, ed. cited, iii. 286, and Seignobos, as cited, p. 409.

It is told of certain tribes of the Australian aborigines that among them it is usual for a man to make a woman his wife by knocking her down and carrying her off senseless; and those wooers doubtless argue that that is clearly the only way to preserve the species. The European who is so unaffectedly aghast at their psychology is not immeasurably distant from them in his sociology while he reasons that the only way to convey culture from the higher level to the lower is by murderous conquest.

X.

But if Gibbon could read the capital lesson in the case of the empire of Charlemagne, why, one asks, did he not draw the same inference in the case of the whole imperialism of Rome? In a measure he did draw it: several times he partially frames it;[1] but in regard to the main theme of his history he offers no such summary and generalisation as he does on the episode of Charlemagne's empire. Here we must assent unreservedly to the judgment of Mr. Morison:—

> It is quite evident that he was not at all unconscious of the deep economic and social vices which undermined the great fabric. Depopulation, decay of agriculture, fiscal oppression, the general prostration begotten of despotism—all these sources of the great collapse may be traced in his text, or his wonderful notes, hinted very often with a flashing insight which anticipates the most recent inquiries into the subject. But these considerations are not brought together to a luminous point.....They lie scattered, isolated, and barren over three volumes, and are easily overlooked. One may say that generalised and synthetic views are conspicuous by their absence in Gibbon.[2]

The fact is that he began his work with neither a

[1] *E.g.* the last four paragraphs of ch. ii.

[2] *Gibbon*, p. 133.

theory nor a sense of the need for one; and only after he had gone far did his subject-matter force him to generalise. When he does, it is only by the way, as aforesaid; but on the other hand he does not, as Mr. Morison in a previous passage asserts, explicitly contradict himself on a clear and vital issue. "On the interesting question of the introduction of the barbarians into the frontier provinces, *and* their incorporation into the legions," says the critic,[1] "he never seems to have quite made up his mind. In the twelfth chapter he calls *it* a 'great and beneficial plan.' Subsequently he calls *it* a disgraceful and fatal expedient." This is one of Mr. Morison's too frequent errors. Two expedients are under notice, and what Gibbon did was to applaud one—the settling of barbarians on the frontier[2]—and condemn the other, the *enlistment* of barbarians in the legions.[3] What is more, it was the special settlement of "captive or fugitive barbarians" on the frontier by Probus that he praised, because in that settlement the colonists were placed under Roman institutions. A little further on[4] he condemns as a "dangerous indulgence" the permission given by Diocletian and his colleagues to several colonies of Carpi, Bastarnae, and Sarmatians, to retain "in some measure their national manners and independence." The judgment may be right or wrong, but the cases were vitally different.

Finally, the enlistment of outside barbarians was an expedient on a different footing from either of these; and Gibbon actually speaks of it as being, even when cautiously managed, a "dangerous reinforcement," in the very page in which he approves of

[1] *Gibbon*, p. 132.
[2] Bohn ed. i, 403 (ch. xii).
[3] *Id.* ii, 221 (ch. xvii).
[4] *Id.* i, 434 (ch. xiii).

the early settlement of barbarian colonies under Roman auspices—a measure which, as he points out, really succeeded extremely well. When he notes that in the fourth century the enlistment of outer barbarians "became every day more universal, more necessary, and more fatal," he points in particular to the fact that they were enrolled in masses "not only in the auxiliaries of their respective nations, but in the legions themselves, and among the most distinguished of the Palatine troops"—the crowning fatality.[1] Here there is no contradiction whatever, but a sound discrimination.

When, however, Gibbon proceeds at the end of his twenty-seventh chapter to specify as "the immediate cause of the downfall of the empire" the abandonment of cuirasses and helmets by the army in the reign of Gratian (375–383), he really sets up a spurious cause, and—though Mr. Morison does not note it—contradicts himself; for in his last note to the previous chapter he had emphatically specified as "the principal *and immediate* cause of the fall of the western empire of Rome" the great settlement of Goths in the East, begun in the reign of Valens. In representing the mere abandonment of heavy armour as the immediate cause of a collapse which was not consummated till a generation later—and this in the face of the fact that Stilicho utterly destroyed the army of Rhadagast in 406—Gibbon is weakly following the militarist empiricism of Vegetius, being led thereto by Montesquieu, whom in the previous case he had rather captiously censured; and his acquiescence in such an

[1] Mr. Morison, in a confused passage, says Gibbon does not "explicitly" bring out the fact that almost the only defenders of the empire against the non-Romanised barbarian invaders were the Romanised barbarians in its pay. In chapter xxvi (vol. iii, pp. 206–9) Gibbon really puts the case quite clearly.

entirely inadequate theory is a proof that he was not well founded in his own judgment.

XI.

A far more incisive thought emerges when, at the close of the thirty-fifth chapter, the historian declares that "If all the barbarian conquerors had been annihilated in the same hour, their total destruction would not have restored the empire of the West; and if Rome still survived, she survived the loss of freedom, of virtue, and of honour." And at the end of the thirty-first—it is always at the ends of his chapters that we get the sociological reflections—there is a very striking verdict on the vain attempt of Honorius to set up a provincial assembly in Gaul. It is hardly consistent with the previous comment on the frontier experiments of Diocletian; but it points with an insight not before attained to the essential causation of imperial decay :—

> If such an institution, which gave the people an interest in their own government, had been universally established, by Trajan or the Antonines, the seeds of public wisdom and virtue might have been cherished and propagated in the empire of Rome.....Under the mild and generous influence of liberty the Roman Empire might have remained invincible and immortal; or if its excessive magnitude and the instability of human affairs had opposed such perpetual continuance, its vital and constituent members might have separately preserved their vigour and independence. But in the decline of the empire, when every principle of health and life had been exhausted, the tardy application of this partial remedy was incapable of producing any important or salutary effects. The emperor Honorius expressed his surprise that he must compel the reluctant provinces to accept a privilege which they should ardently have solicited. A fine of three, or even five pounds of gold was imposed on the absent representatives, who seem to have declined this imaginary gift of a free constitution as the last and most

> cruel insult of their oppressors—this though they were empowered to expose the grievances and wishes of their constituents; to moderate the excessive or unequal weight of taxes; and to deliberate on every subject of local or national importance that could tend to the restoration of the peace and prosperity of the seven provinces.

So far as it goes, the insight here is so clear that we are set wondering why it did not go further. Later, indeed, it did go further. On his annotated copy he wrote: "Should I not have deduced the decline of the Empire from the civil wars that ensued after the fall of Nero, or even from the tyranny which succeeded the reign of Augustus? Alas! I should; but of what avail is this tardy knowledge? Where error is irreparable, repentance is useless."[1] Thus did the sheer total pressure of the subject slowly move him from point to point of valid speculation, after his early bent to theory had been for years overborne by the fascination and distraction of its detail. But even here he is only moving towards the solution; he has not compassed it.

It is by standing on his shoulders that we can see further: it is by absorbing without effort his splendid distillation of the history of an era, by subsisting at our ease on his rich granary of observation, that we can reach the conclusion of which he came short. From his pages more convincingly than from any other man's work we can learn the lesson that the moral and political decline of Rome began before Augustus; that the first prince's restrained autocracy and the measureless tyranny which followed it are in their date and degree alike the due sequel of the imperialism which preceded; that the doom was sealed when once the destiny of dominion was

[1] Cited by Dr. Bury in his Introduction, p. xxxv.

nationally embraced. Empire, in the only significant sense of the word, *is* decline; that is the beginning and the end of the whole matter. To be clear, we must define our terms. The "British Empire" is strictly a mere geographical expression as regards the self-governing colonies. Empire is properly national *imperium;* and in the exact ratio in which dominion displaces self-rule and self-development in either the dominating or the dominated race, it spells decadence. In Roman history there is no break and no arrest in the moral process from the moment when the Senate had clearly grasped the purpose of putting a Roman yoke on the neighbouring peoples of Italy: on the day they thus gave the lie to their own code of political right, humanity being what it was, they began the evolution which ended in Augustulus. Nothing short of the resolve *not* to war for empire could have saved the state; and already in the days of the Gracchi, when it had its last recognisable chance to change its course of growth, the evil had gone too far for men's capacity of self-judgment. The very reformers were attainted with the disease against which they empirically strove: the people had too long been drugged by the bribe of empire to work their own salvation, too long debauched by the vile joy of crushing other men's liberties to be capable of saving their own. That is the "why" and the "how" of the process of the annihilation of the state by the empire, of which Coleridge merely noted the occurrence, as the youthful Gibbon and Montesquieu had done before him.

Let him who doubts it all begin with Gibbon's judgment on the situation under Honorius. It was *then* impossible to regenerate the empire by methods which might conceivably have prospered earlier. But

what could have taught Trajan to plan the regeneration of the empire by giving Home Rule to the provinces? The very purpose and ideal of empire was the perfect subordination of the provinces: from the point of view of the imperator, a self-governing province would have been the extremity of possible menace to the imperium. Sooner would he dream of re-creating the Roman *comitia* of the days before Cæsar, the power of the tribunes and the tumultuous play of the will of the plebs. Dimly seeing as much after his book is written, Gibbon recedes for a starting or turning-point to the anarchy after Nero; and then, realising at once why there was such anarchy, to the tyranny of Tiberius. But whence that, if not from the roots of the principate of Augustus? And whence that but from the fatal triumph of Julius and the succeeding convulsions of the triumvirate? And whence the triumph of Julius but from the Senate's lust of empire? Why the deadly conquest of Gaul, unless because of the conquests of Greece and Spain? And whence extra-Italian empire save as the sequel of empire within Italy?

It is all so sequent, for those who will think sequently, that we must finally endorse the dictum of Coleridge: the History does not philosophically explain the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. We can but repeat, in qualification of the judgment, that Coleridge himself no more adequately solved the problem than Gibbon had done; and that Gibbon, with an industry of which Coleridge could but dream, had colligated though he did not synthesise the evidence. Or let us go just one step further and realise that Gibbon had made an advance towards the full view such as none had made before him, unless it be Montesquieu, who likewise failed to impose his

conclusion conspicuously on his admirable essay. The whole of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, be it remembered, had lived and died without suspecting that the so-called rise of Rome was of a piece with its fall; or that empire is just a lengthened arc of decay. Dante never dreamt that the Roman dominion was aught but a splendid achievement which somehow miscarried as all human things do; his dream for the world was to repeat the effort. The keen eye of Machiavelli, searching in Roman records for the secrets of Roman greatness, could not see that from the first the empire carried ruin in its womb. He indeed flatly opposed mere conquest; but he clung to the earlier Roman policy of paramountcy over allies, which was but the thin end of the wedge of conquest. The doom of medieval Italy was upon even his clear spirit: he could see no alternative to expansion but subjugation; no destiny for states but to enslave or be enslaved; and he toiled subtly at the old impossibility of framing a perpetual motion of bondage-working liberty. For him the problem of the state was to succeed in the Roman way without paying the Roman price, without incurring the Roman ruin—a thing not in the power of Gods or men. States can subsist healthily and progressively only under conditions in which their citizens all round act as moral checks upon each other. When that function is paralysed by co-operation in tyranny or rapine, social dissolution begins with the certainty of a law of nature.

In Gibbon's day, after Spain and France had in their fortunately restricted measure wrought out afresh the old demonstration, men had not yet learned the ancient lesson, though some were learning it in relation to contemporary things. England, after being

arrested after the first step on a new road of imperialism under Cromwell, had resumed the march under Chatham ; and who was to say in that generation that there was a fell fatality in the great example which England was supposed to be copying? Nay, how many have seen it yet? I have confessed that the nineteenth century substantially failed, in England as elsewhere, to read the visible lesson of Gibbon's mighty record. Save in the voices of protesting minorities there is nothing in our public life or our popular literature to show that Englishmen in general, educated or uneducated, see any more deeply into the case of the Roman Empire than he did, or even that they realise what he actually set forth. Most of them if they could would set out on the old Roman path with the proverbial "light heart" of the dullard on the road to ruin. They have neither the character nor the intelligence that should win them a better fate. We have hardly the right, then, to impute it to Gibbon as a short-coming that over a century ago he was not conspicuously wiser.

Still, when we analyse his error down to its sources in his character, we shall be bound to admit in strict justice that as a political organism, as a man in the civic relation to his fellows, he figures at his worst. The slow growth and fitfulness of his sense of the causes of ruin in antiquity correlates with his incurious and unjudging relation to the process of misgovernment in his own day. Above all, it is to be understood in the light of his outbreak over the French Revolution, which he had no more foreseen than he did the end of Lord North's American policy when he began blandly voting in its support in the House of Commons. All those years of close contemplation of the downward course of ancient things had left him

not a whit more philosophically alive to the main drift of his own age than the most superficial of its politicians. The residual fact is so staggering to all optimism, so obscure at first sight to the believer in the intelligibility of all causation, that to it we must finally address ourselves if we would synthesise our judgment of the man. We end, as we began, with our attention fixed on the concrete personality, the complex of bias and circumstance, genius and limitation, greatness and littleness, which we name Gibbon.

XII.

There is a sharp descent in the order of our sensations when we turn from the historian of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire to the member of Parliament; and there is a further descent to be made when we contemplate him in his last years screaming over the French Revolution. That Gibbon should have been a steady supporter of the ministry of Lord North, while that most amiable of men was losing half the British Empire at the orders of his king, deeply averse to the task, but outwardly imperturbable in the doing of it—this is so perplexing a fact that one casts about on all sides for an explanation. Was Gibbon bent solely on securing a sinecure? Was the contemplative historian really as blind as the Tory majority to the madness of the course taken? Or was he so charmed by North's wit and invincible urbanity as to give his support to the Minister without caring how the policy went?

The answer must be a half-yes to the first and last questions, and a half-no to the other. First we have Gibbon's voluntary avowal to his friend Deyverdun:[1]

[1] Letter of May 20, 1783.

"You have not forgotten that I went into Parliament without patriotism and without ambition, and that all my views tended to the convenient and respectable place of a lord of trade. That situation I at length obtained." He had to wait for it five years, entering Parliament in 1774, getting his post in 1779, and losing it finally in 1782, when the Board was abolished at North's fall, by way of fulfilling Burke's scheme of "economical reform." Had he been capable of speaking in Parliament, he would doubtless have been sooner and better rewarded; but, as he repeatedly avowed, he shrank from oral debate. The good speakers, he said, filled him with despair, the bad ones with terror. He was essentially a man of the study and the desk. As it was, for his "sincere and silent vote" he got an office worth £700 a year for three years; and the money was a serious help to his fortunes, straitened as they were by the selfishness of his spendthrift father. There can be no question that this gain was his primary object in accepting the seat for the pocket borough of Liskeard.[1]

But though he speaks of his "sincere" vote, there is plenty of evidence that he was not blind to the folly of the king's course of coercion, carried out for him by the secretly reluctant North. Mr. Morison, whose criticism at this point we are bound to endorse, understated even the evidence before him; and the issue of Gibbon's complete correspondence supplies more. At the beginning of 1775 he writes that he thinks the cause of the Government "in this instance the cause of England"; but already in February he thinks

[1] See the unmutilated version of his letter to Holroyd, of September 10, 1774, describing his significant bargain with his cousin Eliot, the "owner" of the seat.—*Private Letters of Edward Gibbon,* Prothero's ed. 1896, i, 228–9.

that not enough troops are being sent to Boston; and in June he writes:[1] "I have not courage to write about America.....The boldest tremble, the most vigorous talk of peace." Even in the letter of the autumn[2] in which he tells how "the same lawless spirit and impatience of government which has infected our colonies has gone forth among the Canadian peasants," he gives as from "a man who might tell me a lye, but who could not be mistaken," the pretence that the addresses from the large trading towns urging the prosecution of the war came unsolicited. So in the autumn of 1776 he assures his sanguine Tory friend that "the *thinking* friends of Government are by no means sanguine"; in the winter of 1777 he banters him on his "noble firmness"; and early in the next year he writes,[3] àpropos of North's tardy attempt at conciliation: "I suppose you imagine that a reluctant effort of reason is at once to efface past errors, to command present acquiescence, and to inspire future confidence."

But there is still more decisive evidence. Mr. Morison lightly treated as a probable invention the circumstantial story that Fox wrote in a copy of Gibbon's History these words: "The author at Brooks's said that there was no salvation for this country until six heads of the principal persons in administration were laid upon the table. Yet, eleven days afterwards, the same gentleman accepted a place of a lord of trade under these very ministers, and has acted with them ever since." There are certainly some very unplausible stories told against Gibbon, but this is not one of them. We have now the full text

[1] Letter suppressed by Sheffield. Prothero's ed. ii, 260.
[2] October 14, 1775.
[3] February 23, 1778. Passage suppressed by Sheffield.

of one of his formerly mutilated letters,[1] in which he says: "I still repeat that in my opinion Lord N. does not deserve pardon for the past, applause for the present, or confidence for the future."

And yet, as all the world knows, he indirectly dedicated to Lord North the fourth volume of his History, speaking of him in the preface as a statesman who when in power "had many political opponents, almost without a personal enemy," and who, "under the pressure of severe infirmity, enjoys the lively vigour of his mind and the felicity of his incomparable temper." Lord North, he adds, "will permit me to express the feelings of friendship in the language of truth; but even truth and friendship should be silent, if he still dispensed the favours of the crown." It is hard to know how to take this historic pronouncement when we learn from the unmutilated correspondence that the person so resentfully mentioned in the letter of 20th December, 1783, asterisked by Sheffield, was just Lord North. The passage runs:—

> To you, in the confidence of friendship, and without either pride or resentment, I will fairly own that I am somewhat of Gerard's opinion [that Gibbon had been badly used by the late Ministry]: and if I did not compare it with the rest of his character, I should be astonished that Lord N[orth] suffered me to depart, without even a civil answer to my letter. Were I capable of hating a man whom it is not easy to hate, I should find myself most amply revenged by the insignificance of the creature in this mighty revolution of India, his own peculiar department.[2]

At least we may say that the changed tone of five years later proves a magnanimous placability;[3] and it

[1] Feb. 28th, 1778. Prothero, i, 331.

[2] *Letters*, ii, 87.

[3] There is also to be noted the effect of the general discovery that the loss of the colonies did no commercial harm, but the contrary.

will be fair as well as charitable to add that the pecuniary needs which had moved the great historian to play the hired partisan in Parliament for eight years were a heavy and perturbing burden for such a man, so placed, and concerned to provide not only for his own eagerly desired literary leisure, but for the comfort of his kind stepmother. His steady and active affection for her and his aunt and his friends is the redeeming side of his whole private life.[1] But the place-hunting episode none the less belongs to the character of the man whose cheek "rarely flushed in enthusiasm for a good cause"; and his later bearing at a far greater crisis of European history forces us finally to realise that the greatest of historians was so in virtue of the learned sagacity which masters and appraises the lore of a dead past, not of the sensitive rectitude and righteous sympathy which make a wise man morally great for his own time. Concerning the miserable American war he had simply never made up his mind. Like the ruck of his countrymen, he affirmed its "justice" without being able for a moment to show its necessity. In other words, as regards international relations he stood by the political ethic of barbarism, without the pretext of barbaric passion. But to say that is only to say that he was on the moral footing of many Englishmen of a century later.

Gibbon was one of the first to see that the separation would not in itself be a loss. "You recollect," he writes to Sheffield in 1792, "that we ought to have been ruined by the independence of America—*selon toutes les règles,* except mine and a few others" (ii, 288).

[1] The charm of his personality on this side is cordially acknowledged by General Read, who writes, after the long and wide biographical survey on which he entered because of his interest in Gibbon: "I must confess that I rise from my task with profound sympathy and sincere regard" (ii, 285).

XIII.

When he returned to Lausanne for his last spell of residence there, Gibbon's character was formed by work, by experience of the world, by success, and by disappointment. He had already made a great reputation, and he was determined to extend and secure it. And if something had been lost by his five years of place-hunting and three of place-holding, some practical insight had doubtless been gained therein. We have now to realise him in his last period.

So much has been done by Christian malice to disparage Gibbon as a man that we are bound to sift vigilantly the anecdotes told to his discredit. Some of the most popular have many signs of fable upon them. I confess at least to an irremovable scepticism over the story told by Sir James Bland Burges, of Gibbon's being put to open confusion by the youthful Pitt—a story which reads very like a reconstruction of that about Gibbon's brush with Mably. Sir James was a garrulous memoirist, who certainly had either a very good memory[1] or a fertile imagination; and as he penned his narrative about Gibbon *thirty-eight years after the alleged event*, the alternatives in that case are left extremely open. By his account, Gibbon, at a certain dinner-party given by the narrator in

[1] It is fair to say that his powers of memory were praised by Richard Cumberland (*Bland Burges Papers*, p. 310); but *his* memory and morals were so bad that he habitually and wilfully told of Anthony Collins a story that, as was pointed out to him, could not possibly be true of Anthony, though it might be true of Arthur Collins. See I. Disraeli's *Curiosities of Literature*, ed. 1867, p. 386. Sir J. B. Burges collaborated with Cumberland in his egregious religious poem, *The Exodiad*. Both were likely enough to dislike Gibbon, and the baronet's biographer avows that "both were hot-tempered, painfully self-conscious, extremely vain, and impulsive to a degree that marred their judgment" (p. 311).

Lincoln's Inn in the year 1780, talked very brilliantly and amusingly, till, just as he had concluded

> one of his best foreign anecdotes, in which he had introduced some of the fashionable levities of political doctrine then prevalent, the "deep-toned but clear" voice of Pitt was heard "very calmly but civilly impugning the correctness of the narrative and the propriety of the doctrines of which it had been made the vehicle." Gibbon then debated the point with great ability till, "finding himself driven into a corner from which there was no escape, he made some excuse for rising from the table, and walked out of the room. I followed him," says the memoirist, "and, finding that he was looking for his hat, I tried to persuade him to return to his seat. 'By no means,' said he. 'That young gentleman is, I have no doubt, extremely ingenious and agreeable, but I must acknowledge that his style of conversation is not exactly what I am accustomed to, so you must positively excuse me.' And away he went in high dudgeon, notwithstanding that his friend [Holroyd, afterwards Lord Sheffield] had come to my assistance."[1]

Now, Gibbon in a letter of 1782,[2] to his stepmother, remarks that he has "no connection, public or private," with the young Pitt, whose father Mrs. Gibbon had disliked, but goes on to speak of him with cordial praise, saying: "We cannot refuse to admire a youth of four-and-twenty whom eloquence and real merit have already made Chancellor of the Exchequer without his promotion occasioning either surprise or censure." In 1784 he writes to Lord Eliot from Lausanne, concerning Pitt, that "a youth of twenty-five, who raises himself to the government of an empire by the power of genius and the reputation of virtue, is not less glorious to the country than to himself."[3] In 1785 he writes to Sheffield, who was

[1] *Selections from the Letters and Correspondence of Sir James Bland Burges*, edited by James Hutton, 1885, pp. 60–61.

[2] *Letters*, ii, 28–29.

[3] Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, i, 237.

opposed to Pitt: "You must own that the fairness of his character, his eloquence, his application to business, and even his youth, must prepossess at least the ignorant in his favour."[1] Finally, we have Lord Sheffield's testimony, in a letter written at the time, to the pleasure with which Gibbon met Pitt at a country house in 1793.[2]

Is it then to be believed that a man of Gibbon's coolness and social address should at the age of forty-three be argued out of his self-possession by a youth, however able, of twenty-one; should have brought this on himself by "fashionable levities of political doctrine" of which there is no other trace; should then exhibit his discomfiture in the most childish and ill-bred way, leaving the room and the house in "high dudgeon," despite the appeals of one of his most intimate friends; and yet should afterwards repeatedly extol that youth in his correspondence to people prejudiced against him, finally expressing his great gratification at a later meeting?[3] That Gibbon should finally forgive the genial Lord North for not more fully rewarding him is quite intelligible in a man of his commonly reputed temper. That a man charged with morbid and unseemly self-love should, while so chargeable, forgive the man who put him to open shame, is a contradiction in terms. It is by a good many degrees more reasonable to hold that Sir J. B. Burges, writing in his old age, thirty-eight years after date, either made a bad mistake as to persons or availed himself of an imaginative memory. Concerning the memoirist we have his friendly biographer's

[1] *Letters*, ii, 127. [2] *Ibid.* p. 398, *note.*

[3] Sir J. B. Burges's biographer, quoting the letter to Lord Eliot, suggests that "very possibly" Gibbon had "forgotten his passage of words with Pitt in Lincoln's Inn." Gibbon's memory was not of that reticulous order.

avowal that after quitting the Foreign Office in 1795 he "applied himself to literary pursuits with moderate success"; that his literary friends do not appear to have been "men of any special merit or force of character," and that "vanity was to the last his besetting weakness."[1] In a letter to Croker written in 1810[2] he brags of his early intimacy with Pitt, saying that they were "young men together in Lincoln's Inn" in 1780, but says not a word of the Gibbon episode. For the rest, his reminiscences of his early youth are at several points quite too remarkable to be convincing.[3]

The story, again, that Gibbon once got down on his knees to declare his love to a lady, and was unable from his corpulence to get up again until assisted by her footmen or maids, seems to be one of those that get told of any suitable personage until usage fixes them to a famous name. Brougham told it of Gibbon and Suzanne Curchod, his first love, who afterwards became Madame Necker: of her it is certainly untrue, for she returned his love, and their episode occurred in his youth. Madame de Genlis told the story in connection with Madame de Crousaz, afterwards Madame de Montolieu, who indignantly denied it. Finally the lady was declared to be Lady Elizabeth Foster (*née* Hervey), afterwards Duchess of Devonshire; this story being told a generation afterwards by two writers, one of whom said he had it from the Duchess. We may be permitted to regard it as a time-elaborated myth.[4] It is not unlikely to have

[1] Work cited, pref. and p. 44. [2] *Id.* p. 310.

[3] See in particular his stories of his interview with the Pope, pp. 40–42.

[4] The story is given in all its forms by General Meredith Read, *Historic Studies*, vol. ii, ch. 134. Cp. Mr. Prothero's note to the *Private Letters*, ii, 154.

been evolved from the fact that Gibbon actually did, only a year before his death, go through a sportive ceremony of kneeling to and kissing the hand of the then Duchess of Devonshire, in the presence of Lady Elizabeth Foster. It was a playful ceremony of knighthood, in which Gibbon swore loyalty for his "adopted son," Wilhelm de Severy, to whom he tells the story in a letter[1] with no hint of any difficulty about rising after kneeling. *Requiescat.*

XIV.

The famous episode with Mdlle. Curchod, in turn, is in no way to Gibbon's discredit. That he "sighed as a lover and obeyed as a son" is indeed one of the proofs that, after boyhood, he was never carried out of himself by a magnanimous passion; but he broke neither his own word nor the lady's heart. Whoso will may read the very complicated story of her relations with the young Gibbon in the faithfully voluminous record of the late General Read, where is cited the memorable letter,[2] so happily preserved, in which she records for us how the young student, not yet deformed in face, appeared to a young woman, herself the beauty of her circle:—

> He has beautiful hair, pretty hands, and the look of a well-bred man. His face is so singular and full of mind that I know no one who is like him. It is so expressive that there is always something new in it. His gestures are so apt that they add greatly to his conversation: in a word, he is one of those very extraordinary countenances that one never tires of examining, depicting, and copying. He understands the deference which is due to women. His manners are easy

[1] Dated October 12th, 1792; given by General Read, ii, 497.

[2] Printed by the Comte d'Haussonville, in *Le Salon de Madame Necker.* I copy the translation of General Read, ii, 329.

without being too familiar. He dances moderately well. In a word, I find that he has few of those mannerisms which are the appanage of the fop. His wit varies immensely.

Alas for the course of true love! With all her cleverness, the brilliant Suzanne did not clearly know her own mind until her first stipulations as to his obtaining his father's consent and settling down at Lausanne had upset everything. At this stage she was keeping another offer on hand; was indeed actually engaged to a wealthy aristocrat two years before her engagement with Gibbon was broken; but at intervals she wrote him, sometimes beseechingly, sometimes angrily, he replying with perturbation; till at length she married the great M. Necker, settled down into normal happiness, and immediately became, with her husband, Gibbon's very good friend. In his closing years she writes to him with an affection which rounds their story in a pathetic peace. In the last year of all she tells him how she has been reviewing their lives in long flashes of memory: "You were for me," she says, "at once twenty years old, and fifty: far away from you, the different places I have inhabited are nothing more than the milestones of my life."[1] A less frustrate love might have worn less beautifully well.

No one, of course, can resist speculating as to what Gibbon's life might have been had he married this captivating and gifted woman, the only one he was ever seriously minded to wed. "Nature endowed you," he writes to her in 1761, "with a beauty which would soften a tyrant and inflame an anchorite; she united with it that happy gift of pleasing which she

[1] Letter in third vol. of *Miscellaneous Works*, orig. ed. p. 662. General Read, it should be noted, has misunderstood the passage cited, which he translates (ii, 345) "you were mine at twenty years of age as well as fifty."

only distributes to a small number of favourites, and which art vainly attempts to imitate."[1] General Meredith Read, a good Christian who nevertheless cherished for Gibbon's memory an affectionate respect, has found and shown that after the match with Mdlle. Curchod was broken off, Gibbon adopted and acted upon the bachelor views of love and marriage current in his class on the Continent in his day and ours.[2] Quite sure of his judgment on all such matters, as on the verity of the Christian religion, the General writes :—

> For the sake of Gibbon and the world at large it was a great misfortune that he did not marry Suzanne Curchod. Her beauty, her intellectual endowments, would have rendered him happy, while the elevation and purity of her character and her deep religious nature would have moulded him in spiritual directions. Having failed to attain and enjoy this beneficent influence, he soon fell into habits of an easy-going philosophy. He was a red-haired man, a man of excitability of sense rather than of enduring passion. The temperament of Gibbon as shown by his hair has never been taken into consideration. Its coarseness of fibre belonged to a sensual organisation, not over-refined and destitute of nervousness. In George Deyverdun he found a congenial companion, whose nature was even more indolent and easy-going than his own."[3]

To some of us, ourselves dark, it is far from clear why sensuality should be supposed to be a speciality of people with red hair, coarse or fine; and still less clear how, granting this to be so, Mdlle. Curchod, who thought Gibbon's hair beautiful, could be trusted to alter his character. It would be rash to deny that she might have made him "nervous"; but when the good General further reasons[4] that

[1] Translation of General Read, ii, 334. The letter had not before been published.

[2] Letter in Read, ii, 354.

[3] *Historic Studies*, ii, 348.

[4] *Ibid.* p. 285

> If Gibbon had married Mdlle. Curchod he might have left the world under a greater debt of gratitude. He might have aided the weak to solve their religious difficulties and to believe in eternal life—that is to say, in Christianity,

we must put his simple philosophy gently but firmly aside. The Christian religion is hardly to be saved by marrying a charming young woman to a fatally red-haired historian. Gibbon's contemporary, Dr. Samuel Johnson, did not manage to save it, though he seems to have been at once sensual and pious, and had apparently no hair to speak of; and his bibulous biographer Boswell, whose piety would hardly permit him to speak of Gibbon without a snarl, was not turned into a successful champion or specimen of his faith by an excellent wife. The General's own pages show, finally, that Madame Necker, already seen to be not exactly the wisest of her sex, was not ascetically truthful; and that, after all, is a fault, like coarse red hair,[1] even if the lady were a sincere Christian—a circumstance which General Read took for granted in the case of Suzanne Curchod with small justification. Not only does she never write to Gibbon as a believing Christian (her phrases are purely deistic), but she was, as General Read knew and showed, the warm friend of the deist Buffon and the correspondent of Voltaire.[2]

Concerning a man's temperament, in this regard, there is little to be said with profit; but the student of Gibbon must reckon with the frequent reproach, sometimes very indignantly phrased, cast on him for

[1] See, on pp. 344–5 of vol. ii. of the *Historic Studies*, Madame Necker's and Gibbon's very different accounts of her views on the subject of wealth. It is to be feared that we must accept Gibbon's circumstantial story, which is not hostile, though not very loyal.

[2] Though she did not want to have it known. See her letter to the Kiehl editors of Voltaire's works, given in translation by General Read, ii, 490–1.

his proneness to *grivoiserie* in the History. Emerson privately put the charge with unwonted violence :—

> All previous and contemporary British historians [he first avowed] are bare-footed friars in comparison with Gibbon. He was an admirable student, a tremendous worker. He banished himself to a lonely chateau, just to work harder ; but he thought uncleanly. He had—as also did Aristophanes, whom I never could read on that account—an imagination degraded and never assoiled, a low wit like that which defaces outbuildings. He was a disordered and coarse spirit, a mind without a shrine, but a great example of diligence and antidote to laziness.[1]

A little earlier in the same record, the sage is cited as saying : "Remember, all criticism dealing with isolated points is superficial." He apparently applied that maxim at his convenience ; for Gibbon's leaning to impropriety affects only a small part of his work. The phrase "a low wit like that which defaces outbuildings" is a gross violence, recoiling on itself. There is in fact a certain want of balance in Emerson's attitude on such matters, which is notable again in his censorious references to *Faust;* and seeing that at times, indeed in most of his writings, he holds a much more even tone,[2] we may suspect that he had a particular measure for the men he did not like. Carlyle's taste in the matter of risky anecdotes is sometimes pretty broad; but Emerson forgives him, as he ostensibly does Shakespeare and Montaigne, though the latter can in his breezier way be fully as *gaulois* as Gibbon.

We must take Gibbon in the light of average male nature, and of the literary taste of his time ; and

[1] *Talks with Ralph Waldo Emerson*, by C. J. Woodbury, 1890, p. 49.

[2] I have said of him elsewhere that "he was always something of a Greek, composed in the presence of the primary human instincts," and this holds good of his essays in general.

though he is not finally to be whitewashed he is not rationally to be spoken of in Emerson's hypermoral manner. Mr. Morison is specially indignant with him for giving in the Greek a desperate story of Procopius about the empress Theodora; but as usual Mr. Morison is unjudicial. It is true that the tale is fairly to be doubted as told against Theodora; though Dr. Bury, a much cooler critic, and one not unfavourable to Theodora, does not treat it as clearly false; but it remains a human document on Byzantine life, and to call the citation of it a "licentious note" is one of Mr. Morison's many misjudgments. There are, indeed, some distinctly gratuitous *grivoiseries* in Gibbon to which that epithet might be fairly applied; and we can but say, finally, that his bias was a perversity, though really not the worst a historian can show. It is one of the anomalies of average English ethics that Englishmen will forgive cruelty and massacre (Mr. Morison does not blench at the worst deed of Charlemagne, and he extolled the persecuting and crusade-mongering St. Bernard), while they shriek at the simple bad taste which obtrudes allusions to the sexual life. "Morality" has come to be so defined that Carlyle's condonation of the partition of Poland is never mentioned as immoral, while Gibbon is so branded for quoting in Greek a tale of Christian vice.

Personally, I should be disposed to say that he shows worse taste in one of the suppressed passages in his Autobiography than anywhere in the History. The anxiety he shows to leave it on record, by a significant turn of phrase, that he enjoyed the favours of Madame Bontemps[1] seems to be of the low order

[1] Memoirs B and C, pp. 204–5, 263.

of infirmity that kisses and tells. We are on his weak side, again, when we find him denouncing in the context the "intolerant zeal of the philosophers and encyclopedists" who "preached the tenets of atheism with the bigotry of dogmatists," and going on to tell how Madame Bontemps was "a devotee untainted with religious gall," and that at Paris he attended her in his carriage "to the sermons of the most popular preachers." "Fourteen weeks," he sums up, "stole away in the enchantment of Paris; and had I been independent and rich I should have prolonged, and perhaps perpetuated, my stay." *Le pauvre bonhomme!*

One other and earlier escapade will doubtless be readily forgiven him by British taste, which has so long condoned the potations of Addison and Pitt, though it loves to magnify those of Paine. One of the restored passages of the Autobiography tells how, in his second residence at Lausanne (1763–64), "the habits of the militia and the example of my countrymen betrayed me into some riotous acts of intemperance, and before my departure I had deservedly forfeited the public opinion which had been acquired by the virtues of my better days."[1] This humble confession apparently exaggerates the case: it does not appear that he was ever seriously discredited at Lausanne. But it is chastening to realise that the greatest historian of modern Europe could on occasion "paint the town red" at the age of twenty-six, two years after he had undertaken authorship.

XV.

Chastening in another sense is the survey of the last chapter in Gibbon's intellectual history. He had

[1] Memoir B, p. 208.

reached in 1788 the end of his great task, that historic consummation of which he speaks so impressively in his Autobiography, so unimpressively in the preface to his fourth volume, simultaneously with which appeared the fifth and sixth. It was in the next year that there began the long convulsion of the French Revolution; and within the year he had begun to talk of it in the customary conservative manner.

In his latter years there had been no preparation on his part for a deeper judgment. It was only despair of further spoils of office, it would seem, that in 1783 had led him to cut loose from political life and settle down once more at Lausanne, in the companionship of his old friend Deyverdun. When, therefore, we note that the sale of less than half his mortgaged patrimony had enabled him to clear off embarrassments and enter on a quietly comfortable life of study and work, we realise how considerable had been the worldly factor in his plans for his life. The five years in which he wrote half his history might well be, as he in effect says, the happiest of his existence; and yet it had needed his political disappointment to drive him to his haven. The use he made of them was to complete his great work and to age rapidly from unwise habits. When poor Deyverdun in 1788 began to suffer from a series of apoplectic fits, Gibbon could see and deplore the folly of his friend's refusal to stint his wine-drinking; but he himself went on drinking his sweet Madeira, protesting that it was essential to both his health and his happiness; and after his friend's death his own sharply intensifying attacks of gout failed to serve him as an admonition. So gout and dropsy went hand in hand. Not to such a physique could come new moral wisdom.

When the load of the History was laid down,

twelve years after the issue of the first volume, he looked forward, as he tells us, first to recreation and then to new employment; and two years later he began, as cheerfully as might be after the loss of his friend, to scheme lighter tasks which were to occupy him and add to his fame without weighing heavily on his energy. Not very wisely, he planned to take as his first topic the history of the House of Brunswick,[1] though he knew no German; and whether from a sense of that disqualification or from the rapid growth of his infirmities, he produced no more than the jejune Italian section of his schemed treatise, which appears in the *Miscellaneous Works*. At the beginning of 1793, again, he writes to Lord Sheffield:—

> I have long revolved in my mind another [*i.e.*, than the Autobiography] scheme of biographical writing: the lives, or rather the characters, of the most eminent persons in arts and arms, who have flourished in Britain from the reign of Henry VIII to the present age. This work, extensive as it may be, would be an amusement rather than a toil;[2]

and he begs his friend to sound, in an extremely artful manner, a leading firm of publishers as to their taking up the venture. But in the same letter he writes: "It is a serious truth that I am no longer ambitious of fame or money; that my habits of industry are much impaired; and that I have reduced my studies to be the loose amusement of my morning hours, the repetition of which will insensibly lead me to the last term of existence." Hence the idea of an engagement from which he "could not with honour recede."

In reality his work was done. Six months before his death he found in Pinkerton, the choleric Scotch

[1] Letter to the Librarian of Wolfenbüttel, given in full in the *Letters*, ii, 227–30.

[2] *Letters*, ii, 359.

scholar and historian, a competent conductor for a scheme he had long sought to set on foot, the publication in a worthy fashion of the whole body of original British historians. He accordingly drew up the prospectus, and he promised to himself another return to Lausanne—whence he had devotedly come to comfort his friend Sheffield on the death of his wife—there to read those historians in chronological order. But his friendly journey had hastened the development of his dropsy, so long and so strangely neglected; and he died on the very day appointed for the issue of the prospectus.

The last important aspect of Gibbon's mind, then, is his attitude to the French Revolution; and the criticism of it must be that he took the ordinary course of the commonplace British majority of his day. Like the most pretentious of their teachers, Burke, he treated the problem as if it were one of abstractly free volitions, in the very act of denouncing the revolutionists for their abstract ideas. "Are you not amazed," he writes[1] to Sheffield just after the fall of the Bastille—"are you not amazed at the French Revolution? They have the power, will they have the moderation to establish a good constitution?" That "they" is the keynote of the whole vast and idle outcry against the Revolution. The French people—an ill-coördinated multitude moved by a hundred forces of aspiration and self-defence, hope and fear—are treated as either a collective entity or at most two struggling entities; but never do the enemies of the Revolution give a sign of seeing that its harm was wrought more by the resistance of the old régime than by the reformers. As little do they

[1] July 22nd, 1789. *Letters*, ii, 198.

ever indicate that they know of the monstrous sequence of wrong, the sense of which first forced measures of reform on a besotted aristocracy, and later made the force which ground that aristocracy to pulp when its own effort to drown the reform in blood drove the long brutalised and now exasperated people to madness.

From Gibbon, beyond the avowal that "the abuses of the *court* and *government* call aloud for reformation,"[1] we never get a hint that millions of the French people had for ages endured abominable oppression. After all his survey of historic causation we get from him but a balder version of the declamation of Burke: "The French nation had a glorious opportunity, but *they* have abused and may lose their advantages." The "they" in due course become the revolutionists, who are charged, like the dog in the tale, with going mad to gain their private ends. Of the atrocious plots of the *noblesse,* who would gleefully have massacred far more of the revolutionists than were ever slain of themselves, we hear nothing. An immense complex of actions and reactions is treated as the work of the would-be reformers alone; and finally the barest desire for reform figures as a wholly devilish sentiment. All the while we feel that if the anti-revolutionists had succeeded in their plots and slain the people by myriads, Gibbon and his class would either have rejoiced, or wagged their heads in solemn repudiation of all sympathy with the victims.

As the plot thickens, Gibbon becomes more and more uncritical. "Poor Burke," he writes in 1791, "is the most eloquent and rational madman that I know. I love Fox's feelings, but I detest the political

[1] Letter of December 14th, 1789.

principles of the man, and of the party." Next year he "shuddered at Grey's motion [for an inquiry into the representative system], disliked the half-support of Fox, admired the firmness of Pitt's declaration, and excused the usual intemperance of Burke"; and he wildly protests to Sheffield: "If you admit the smallest and most specious change in your Parliamentary system you are lost."[1] A little later we hear from him of "the blackest demon in hell, the demon of democracy."[2] Such was the measure of the judgment of the great historian on the greatest historical event enacted under his own eyes.

The sophisticated Greek fable makes out that the appetite of love can turn men into lower animals; Circe, the Queen of Heaven, the bewitching Moon-Goddess, having been humbled by sophists to the mere spirit of sex. The fable is far astray. That wherein men truly approximate to brutes is not the appetite of love, which even in their vices they idealise, but the appetite of hate. Thereby alone are they truly animalised. Gibbon going to church in the carriage of Madame Bontemps is not an imposing spectacle, but it is decent and edifying in contrast with Gibbon turned by terror and rage into a blood-thirsty little bourgeois, screaming for the strangling of democracy. He is here but the type of the average Englishman of his day: shall we say, of ours? We know our ancestors from our contemporaries. Take the common citizen, cultured or untaught, from the plane of reasoned and bloodless debate with his fellows to that of tribal passion, and in a trice he is become one of Bellona's herd, seeing the world red,

[1] Letter of May 30th, 1792.
[2] Letter to Lady * * *, November 8th, 1792, in Sheffield's original collection.

as deaf to the science of his sane hours as any whooping savage. In the moral tempest of the French Revolution, political wisdom disappears from the average English consciousness. The very faculty of reflection is ousted by fury, and the higher capacities assimilate to the lower. Pitt dwindles from a far-seeing statesman into a tribal leader. The group of aristocrats who had sanely resisted the earlier and less overwhelming madness that warred upon the American colonies, become panic-stricken for their caste and their possessions; and in their cruel fear can think of no men's claims but their own. Political society becomes the analogue of a crowd in a burning building: the one instinct at work is that which tramples over bodies to security. Gibbon in that environment—the great historian reduced to the infuriated Anti-Jacobin; the artist of the vast drama of old Rome dwarfed to the condign comrade of the parish beadle—is one of the humiliations of humanity.

We can but turn away with a sigh from the spectacle of such power conjoined with such ineptitude; such grasp of the long mutation of the past, and such bewildered empiricism over a great transformation close at hand; such power to learn from books, and such blindness to the law implicit in things; such fervour of sympathy with the sufferings of a destroyed caste of oppressors, and such cold indifference to the long agony of half a nation. But we ourselves shall not have wrought out the problem until it comes home to us that the anomaly of Gibbon is just the anomaly of the race of man, wrought out afresh before us in every generation, nay, every hour. Most of his readers to-day are as ready as he to wax maudlin over an act of blood which strikes down the single head of a state, as callous as he to the vast cruelty of the

organised life and to the immeasurable crimes committed in the name of kings and nations. Perhaps we have learned a little from his work and from his case. There remains open at least the question whether we should say of him that it is hopeful to find such historic sagacity and personal good feeling possible to one so straitened of heart and brain on the civic side, or that that deformity turns to nought all hope based on the diffusion of historic light. Either way he constitutes for us a memorable item in that most interesting and most miserable of all spectacles —human nature. And it consists with that nature that we should be fain to rest finally on the memory of his achievement. A man is to be measured, let us say once more, by what he availed, not by his defect. It is in his variation from the norm that he becomes enduringly significant for his fellows. As sings the old poet:

> Unless above himself he can
> Erect himself, how poor a thing is man!

Gibbon the historian has raised himself above Gibbon the man to a height at which he stands unrivalled, magistral, and beyond humiliation.

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

It is one of the disappointments of literary history that no woman has yet written a quite worthy book on Mary Wollstonecraft. A woman ought to do it, unless it be a fallacy to suppose that, other things being equal, a woman can best understand a woman; and yet from women, relatively to what she has done for them, Mary Wollstonecraft has had less appreciation than from men. Neither from that side, however, has she been overpraised. Now and then she has been discussed by men and by women with both judgment and kindness; but it is surprising how often her case has fallen into the hands of men with too little of the spirit of justice, and of women with too little of the spirit of sympathy.

The difficulty is, to put it briefly, that she was a woman of unusual calibre as well as of unusual character; with greater power of thought as well as deeper power of feeling than was given to almost any of her women contemporaries; and that most of those who have undertaken to describe her have been concerned to establish rather their own superiority than hers. Something of this is due, perhaps, to the intellectual constriction of English life, still so hemmed in by convention and conformity, by the code of the parlour and the code of the pulpit. In France both men and women can do justice, and more than justice, to a woman like Madame Roland, who with all her

courage and energy was neither so fine nor so just a spirit as Mary Wollstonecraft. But in England a critic who should have ventured fifty years ago to speak for the Englishwoman as Sainte-Beuve spoke for the Frenchwoman would have been vilified as a person of bad morals ; and to this day, I suppose, an English authoress had need hesitate to write save with severe patronage or anxious disparagement of the authoress of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.*

This surely cannot go on for ever. Even in Anglo-Saxondom there are now readers who can discern a goodness beyond the reach of propriety and a wisdom beyond the scope of the newspaper moralist. Mary Wollstonecraft was a thinker ; and thought somehow lives down alike the censure and the patronage of mediocrity. The most recent study of her work[1] is by a woman student, and has been gone about with a thoroughness not exhibited in previous performances; but it somewhat lacks the laying on of the hands of literary and moral inspiration. Thus the way is still quite open for the adequate, the worthy book. It should be written, one fancies, by a woman old enough to be past posing, declamation, moral cruelty, and nervousness, but young enough in heart to love sincerity. And she will have to be able to recognise original thought when she meets with it, and to judge of both form and matter by comparative tests, allowing for the antecedents and the environment.

Having thus cast upon the Woman of the Future the responsibility of doing Mary Wollstonecraft justice, I may callously add to the other insufficient estimates a brief account of how she strikes some males—for I trust I am not singular in my attitude.

[1] *A Study of Mary Wollstonecraft,* etc. By E. R. Clough. (Longmans & Co., 1898.)

As the special snare of the male in such a case is, I suppose, the tendency to credit too much to a fair face, I shall seek to ground my judgment primarily and mainly on her intellectual work, and to appraise that, not, as some of her women critics have done, in terms of the first impression it makes on a reader with a present-day outlook, but in relation to the literature of her own period. The story of her life is well enough known to make this fairly easy for anyone who realises that true criticism consists in such comparison, and is willing to take the trouble. She had a haphazard education, and, on her father's side, a bad heredity. He was wayward, passionate, thriftless, idle, and irresponsible. These are perhaps not the worst domestic conditions for the evolution of capacity;[1] indeed it is doubtful whether a good father, a normal education, and an easy life might not have kept Mary Wollstonecraft unknown to fame, and notable only to her friends as a clever and thoughtful woman. But the fashion in which her patronising editors belittle her for her disadvantages, instead of recognising the natural greatness of the powers which forced their way despite these, is trying to the critical sense. One writer after another has exclaimed—and the women are the most grittily censorious—at the faults of her style, as tried by the standards not of her day but of ours ; seldom saying anything of its merits.

The faults are those of diffuse declamation and conventionally ambitious phrase. She read much, thought much, and was at all times full of feeling ; and it is the constant play of intellectual and emotional life in

[1] She herself maintained, "without dreaming of a paradox, that an unhappy marriage is often very advantageous to a family, and that the neglected wife is in general the best mother." (*Rights of Woman*, 2nd ed. p. 59.)

her that drives her to the current vocabulary and the current phrase. She was too spontaneous, too abundantly overflowing with ideas, to stay to sift her terms. Thoroughly fastidious, in the best sense of the term, both physically and morally, she did not live and write long enough to develop the artist's fastidiousness of expression. Yet so easily does she find her words, so masterfully does she clothe her thought even in borrowed or conventional forms, and so surely does she attain cadence in every sentence, that any watchful craftsman, I think, will admit her to have had the makings of an admirable writer. As always happens, the faults are most salient where in her writing the utterance comes least directly from her heart—where she is least "intimate," or furthest from the centres of her gift. Thus her least skilfully written books are her *Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution* and her stories. In fiction, her mastering didactic purpose inevitably withheld her from artistic poise; and in her work of historical philosophy, though its moral power and insight put it far above most attempts of the kind in that age or even in this, the difficulty of the subject and the lack of the due gestation prevent her attaining finish and individuality of expression. She wrote easily, and she had not only to live but partly to maintain her father, sisters, and brothers by her work; hence she did not brood out a masterpiece but threw off a rapid and eager sketch. When, however, she is penning in an intimate mood her observation of life, as in her *Letters on Sweden, Norway, and Denmark,* even the occasional use of a diction which recalls the bad novels of the period cannot obscure the high literary faculty. In these letters, written under singular circumstances, there is an

alternation of feeling and reflection that makes them permanently interesting. Their author was at that time the unwedded wife of Gilbert Imlay, an American whom she met in Paris in 1793. By joint consent, they were not ecclesiastically married, though she believed their love would endure: indeed, it appears that they could not have been married at Paris at that time, since she, a British subject, could not go through the ceremony without declaring herself such, which would then have been a dangerous matter; and any other manner of marriage would have been invalid in England.[1] As it was, she would have been held married under the law of Scotland, inasmuch as Imlay openly called her his wife from the first, and designated her "Mary Imlay, my best friend and wife," in a legal document.

But, whatever be said of the forms, the realities went ill. Imlay entered on a course of speculation, and developed instability of character in other ways. Some other attachment grew up on his part in the second year of their union, while he was in London and Mary in Paris; and she already knew herself in some degree slighted when in 1795 she undertook on his behalf to go to Sweden and Norway, taking her child and a nurse with her, to see to affairs of his there which had been mismanaged. The letters, even as published, tell of a hurt heart, bearing up bravely in strange scenes, and fronting many hardships. To read them in the knowledge of all the circumstances is to realise what a rare spirit produced them. For happy people, travel in Scandinavia in those days was no simple matter: for a sorrowful woman, with her child and her nurse, going on her husband's business,

[1] Kegan Paul, *William Godwin, his Friends and Contemporaries*, 1876, i, 215.

it meant something heroic. And we can well understand the compliment paid to her by a Danish lieutenant who spoke English, in the remark that she "asked *men's* questions" on the life around her. Before Laing, no English traveller in those parts exhibits such a sociological insight as hers. The published letters, I think, were elaborated; but they are the work of a mind always energising, and of a better prose-writer than most even of the noted penmen of the time. In her book-making she began at the root of the matter: she had something to say. In her *Letter to Burke in Vindication of the Rights of Men,* no less than in her better known *Vindication of the Rights of Woman,* her spontaneous feeling, playing in the sphere of her habitual observation and individual thought, gives her style a vibrating life that tells through all the flapping vocabulary, like the movement of a supple dancer in a cumbrous old costume. The high-bred Elizabethan women, probably, moved gracefully enough in their fardingales to the eye of the gentlemen of their day; and the test of Mary Wollstonecraft's style is primarily the impression it made on good judges and open minds in her own time.

Godwin, we are told, was at first repelled by its laxities, but later recognised its strength. In point of fact she was a better writer than Godwin, who was at least as conventional as she, without her nervous intensity. Opening the *Political Justice* at haphazard one lights anywhere on some such sentence as: "In the third place, sincerity is in an eminent degree calculated to conduce to our intellectual improvement," and on series of thin commonplaces ponderously clothed. A thought which a newly felt phrasing might make significant is made vacuous by

sheer verbal inflation, as in the saying: "The period of bold and unrestricted communication is the period in which the materials of happiness ferment and germinate." Compare such writing, which is normal in Godwin, with an average sentence in the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, as this :—

> Make the heart clean: let it expand and feel for all that is human, instead of being narrowed by selfish passions; and let the mind frequently contemplate subjects that exercise the understanding without heating the imagination, and artless modesty will give the finishing touches to the picture.

Or this :—

> She who can discern the dawn of immortality in the streaks that shoot athwart the misty night of ignorance, promising a clearer day, will respect, as a sacred temple, the body that enshrines such an improvable soul.

Such prose has the essential qualities of fluidity and rhythm, which Godwin's lacks. But it is not merely with writers of her own day that she may be compared to her advantage; she is really a better writer than some of those who to-day are zealous to disparage her. Some of these, acridly protesting against her artificiality, are themselves conventional practitioners, full of machine-made phrase, with no cadence to redeem it. She wrote with a touch of formality in an age of artificial diction; they write at once artificially and awkwardly in an age abounding in natural and individual prose. Passing over a worse case, I am fain to make a stand over the strictures of Mrs. Fawcett, who has thought fit to safeguard the readers of her edition of the *Rights of Woman* in this fashion :—

> The faults of the 'Vindication' as a literary work are *patent upon the face of it.* There is a want of order and system in it which may, perhaps, be attributed to the desultory

> education of the writer.....A more important *blemish* to modern *ears* consists in the formal and frequently stilted language *in which the writer conveys her meaning*.....There are other faults in the book deeper than those of order and style, *which* are probably to be traced to a reaction against the school of ethics *which* proclaimed that appearances and decorum were ends in themselves *to be diligently sought for.* To this reaction may also, I believe, be attributed the errors of Mary Wollstonecraft's own life, and those of so many members of the circle *in which she moved.* In unravelling the curious tangle of relationships, intrigues, suicides and attempted suicides, of the remarkable group *of personalities* to whom Mary Wollstonecraft belonged, one is sickened for ever, as Mr. Matthew Arnold has said, of the subject of irregular relations.

The tautologies, the lapses, and the padding in these sentences are sufficiently indicated by the italics. The crudity of the judgments calls for more explicit comment. It is a hasty criticism which ascribes lack of system in a book to the desultory education of its writer. Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* is admitted by admirers to be very ill-arranged; and Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution* is a much less organically sequent treatise than Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication.* But it is always the way in England to give lavish eulogy unto him that hath had too much, and apply detraction to those who have been amply defamed. Mrs. Fawcett is lamentably loyal to the national convention; and as she is thus sure of the applause of the solid majority, whatever be her views on woman suffrage, there is no undue severity, I trust, in the process of indicating her commonplace injustice.

In the manner of the Philistinism from which Arnold was so imperfectly alienated, she proceeds to charge upon what she calls "irregular relations," and on the "circle" of Mary Wollstonecraft, certain

suicides which took place long after Mary Wollstonecraft's death. The suicide of Fanny Godwin had nothing to do with any "irregular relationship"; unless we are to assume that all suicides by women are so caused. Harriet Westbrook was legally married to Shelley; and he left her. Mary Godwin he did not leave. It is a very trivial sophism to connect Mary Wollstonecraft's attempted suicide with her views on marriage. There is not the slightest reason to doubt that she would have acted in exactly the same fashion had she been married to Imlay in a Trinitarian Church, with all the mummeries insisted on by Mrs. Fawcett's class. Mary Wollstonecraft had seen her sister Eliza married to a man whom she had to leave; and in many another "Christian" home she had seen marriage "fail" miserably enough.[1] Hundreds of married women are betrayed or deserted by their husbands every year; but Mrs. Fawcett does not see in that state of things any argument against the institution of marriage. It is only when a stone is to be cast at reason and courage that such dialectic is sanctified. The married lives of John Wesley and of Coleridge, and the first marriage of Milton, were sorry failures; the union of the Carlyles was one of chronic friction; and Milton's upbringing of his daughters was a moral cruelty; yet Philistia, male and female, has no scorn for these breakdowns. But because Mary Wollstonecraft, as pure-minded and scrupulous a woman as ever breathed, acted loyally on a moral principle as deliberately held, and certainly as sane, as Milton's doctrine of divorce, she is decried

[1] She was not encouraged to alter her view by what she saw of married life either in Catholic France or in the Protestant countries of the North of Europe. See the *Letters from Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*, iv, xvi, xix, xx (Morley's ed. pp. 37, 138, 157, 161).

to the fifth generation by men and women who suppose themselves to deserve the name of Liberals. What does Mrs. Fawcett think, I wonder, of the spirit of Mr. Arnold's attitude towards "irregular relationships" in his last poem to "Marguerite," or of his ostentatious tribute to George Sand? Is it that nothing succeeds like success?

There is no saying what in particular will "sicken" some people in the way of "errors of life." I heard during the South African War of a lady of Mrs. Fawcett's way of thinking on morals and politics, who was all for the war, and would have liked to circulate Sir Percy Fitzpatrick's book broadcast, by way of promoting what she held to be sound politics. Women who are thus capable of joining hands with some of the worst passions of mankind, participating in reckless calumny and foolish hate, taking comfort in carnage and hounding on senseless men to new iniquity, can complacently profess to draw their skirts aside from the life of a woman whose one serious "error" was a too intense sensibility, and who was as incapable of their wholesale malignity as of highway robbery. Once for all, let me say, by way of putting on record the view of some at least of the minority, that this was a woman the latchet of whose shoe they might fitly count it no dishonour to unloose.

The essential principles of right and wrong in her case being thus vindicated, I must proceed to admit that she was not repulsively perfect. Her sister, Mrs. Bishop—"poor uncomfortable Bess"—was a fool and something of a vixen; but that did not quite justify Mary in telling her once, with a quite stupid harshness—that kind of hard rudeness into which sensitive people sometimes lapse, perhaps, from sheer nervousness

—that she would be glad to help her but could not have her in the house. At the time of that writing, certainly, she was in sore trouble. On the other hand, in her correspondence with Godwin after their marriage, she showed quite enough temper over the "icy philosophy" of his letters to reassure those male sociologists who fear that equality may make women unduly philosophic. But these and other such minor deviations from her own ideal are the only ones I have noted in her life that come under the heading of positive faults. The fact is that she and her sisters were all highly-strung women, with a heredity of neurosis from a highly neurotic father, and their reactions were at all times excessive.[1] Her friend and benefactor, the publisher Johnson, to whose house in her London days of literary work she often went for society, tells that "she was incapable of disguise. Whatever was the state of her mind, it appeared when she entered.....When harassed, which was very often the case, she was relieved by unbosoming herself, and generally returned home calm, frequently in spirits."[2] The same kind helper, who gave her the lead to literary work which ended in giving permanent interest to her name, tells briefly what she did for her family. His short note is a main document for her biography:—

> She entered upon her house in George Street at Michaelmas 1787, and continued there till Michaelmas 1791. Here she wrote her *Rights of Woman*. A translation from the Dutch of *Young Grandison* was put into her hands, which she almost re-wrote. She translated *Necker on Religious Opinions*, compiled the *French Reader*, introducing some original pieces, and prefixed a preface to it. She began a

[1] Mary tells in one letter how her sister, while riding in a coach, "bit her wedding ring all to pieces" (Kegan Paul, i, 169).

[2] Kegan Paul, as cited, i, 194.

novel under the title of the *Cave of Fancy*, wrote many articles in the *Analytical Review—Answer to Burke, Elements of Morality, from the German*, which she first studied here, and a translation of Lavater's *Physiognomy* from the French.

Her brothers and sisters were occasionally with her when they were unsettled. Hers was their home, and she took every method to improve and prepare them for respectable situations. She consulted with Mr. Barlow on the probability of getting a farm in America for Charles [a scapegrace, who did well with her help] which was determined upon, and he was placed with a farmer here for instruction. He left England the latter end of 1792. James, who had been at sea, was sent to Woolwich for a few months to be under Mr. Bonnycastle, and afterwards on board Lord Hood's fleet as a midshipman, where he was presently made a lieutenant. Much of the instruction which all of them obtained was under her own roof, and most if not all of the situations [as governesses] which her sisters had were procured by her exertions. In the beginning of 1788 she sent Everina to Paris for improvement in the language.....

In a part of this period, which certainly was the most active of her life, she had the care of her father's estate, which was attended with no little trouble to both of us. She could not during this time, I think, expend less than £200 on her brothers and sisters.

An active and nobly generous beneficence was indeed the chief law of her nature. All through her youth we find her sacrificing herself for others; furnishing a room for her friend Fanny Blood when that young lady—who finally had not the courage to go to it—craved for a place where she could be free from the distractions of her home; sailing to Lisbon to be with her again when she was married and expecting her confinement, whereof she died; writing a pamphlet to earn ten pounds to help Fanny's parents (of whom the man was a toper) to go to Dublin—always doing kind things, and only now and then, when nervously overwrought, failing to say them. It is difficult to express the moral superiority of such

a life to that of the parlour virtue which has been wont to asperse her.

In breaking down as she did under her great trial, seeking to end her life when her first husband fell away from their free union, she lays herself open to the charge of not being able to live up to her doctrine of free choice; but thus to fail in fortitude is not to lack goodness or nobleness of character. It was on her return from her arduous journey, made on his behalf, that she found he no longer desired her companionship, but proposed to settle an annuity on her. "From you," she wrote, "I will not receive any more: I am not yet sufficiently humbled to depend on your beneficence." Once again he sought to patch the matter up; but when she found he had set up an intrigue with her own maid, she turned away once for all. Imlay's unworthiness—for he lacked honour even to the extent of failing to provide for his child after undertaking to do so—perhaps did more to make her despair than her own sense of abandonment. And when, saved from her hardily planned suicide, she resumed her life, her rally was healthy and magnanimous enough. At all times she was apt to swing the whole length of the nervous pendulum. Frequently in the letters written in her twenties she talks of expecting speedy death. "I have been very unwell," she writes once; "my constitution is much impaired; the prison walls are decaying, and the prisoner will ere long get free." Yet she always shrank from annihilation—the recoil being simply the spring of life within her. Therefore it was that she could resume her literary life for her child's sake, and, within a year of her leap from Putney Bridge, could marry her former friend Godwin. It is noted by Godwin that she neither vituperated Imlay nor

permitted others to do so in her presence; here showing a greatness of mind of which probably few women would have been capable. He had had enough of idle good nature to repeat his offers of a money provision: but she firmly refused. "I want not such vulgar comfort, nor will I accept it. I never wanted but your heart: that gone, you have nothing more to give. Forgive me if I say that I shall consider any direct or indirect attempt to supply my necessities as an insult I have not merited, and as done rather out of tenderness for your own reputation than for me." For the child she left him to provide as he pleased. Then it was that he gave a bond for a sum to be settled on the child; but "neither principal nor interest was ever paid." He was of another nature than hers. It does not appear that she ever gave him any kind of reason for turning away from her; but after the first passionate scorn of his fickleness was past, she seems to have silently reasoned that on her own principles she was bound to let the death of love be the end of claim, and to cease to turn a grief into a grievance.

Thus from first to last she was a thinker, tossed at times by great and small storms of feeling, but always in the end subduing passion to the service of reason. The signal merit of her *Vindication* is that it is never the mere resentful protest of a woman who had suffered and seen her dear ones suffer from the odious conventions which at every turn hampered and degraded her sex, but a persistent trial of the case by the vital principles of individual and social well-being. To call her, as did the late Professor Morley, a "too faithful disciple of Rousseau," is a strange error. No one in her day exposed more effectively than she the irrationalities of Rousseau; and at the same time no one saw more clearly or urged more wisely the

impossibility of sudden and violent social reform. That principle, blusterously turned by Burke to the vindication of all manner of prescriptive abuse, she rightly held as a guide to action, not as a veto upon it; and her reply to Burke's *Reflections* is to this day well worth reading for its swift eloquence and its keen home thrusts of criticism.

It was her gift to get at the essentials of her problems. Even Mrs. Fawcett concedes that there is no getting away from her comprehensive reasoning on the rights of women; and there is no defending Burke's angry sophistry from her exposures. I think they helped to inspire the more massive performance of Paine. Many readers have admired Paine's epigram on Burke's hollow panegyric of the suffering aristocracy and royalty of France: "he pities the plumage, but forgets the dying bird"; but I have not seen it noted that in Mary Wollstonecraft's *Letter to Burke in Vindication of the Rights of Men,* published in 1790, some months before the issue of Paine's *Rights of Man,* there occurs (p. 31) the phrase: "You seem to consider the poor as only the live stock of an estate, the feather of hereditary nobility." It is on record that when Godwin first met his future wife—it was before her union with Imlay—he was displeased because her flow of clever talk prevented any talk from Paine, who was in the company, and whom Godwin wished to hear. Paine, who may be trusted to have recognised genius when he met it, was probably listening to good purpose. It was not often so well worth his while. "She was one," wrote her daughter Mrs. Shelley, "whom all loved who had ever seen her. Many years are passed since that beating heart has been laid in the cold, still grave, but no one who has ever seen her speaks of her without enthusiastic

admiration." The young Southey, not yet turned Tory, writing from London to a friend in 1797, not long before her death, and just before her marriage with Godwin, lets us see the clever talker as she was in the fulness of her powers and of her experience :—

> Of all the lions or *literati* I have seen here, Mary Imlay's countenance is the best, infinitely the best ; the only fault in it is an expression somewhat similar to what the prints of Horne Tooke display—an expression indicating superiority ; not haughtiness, nor sarcasm, in Mary Imlay, but still it is unpleasant. Her eyes are light brown ; and although the lid of one of them is affected by a little paralysis, they are the most meaning eyes I ever saw.

Perhaps the searching brown eyes had too consciously detected a certain inadequacy in Southey: in the portrait they seem kindly enough. But she had a right, be it noted, to some sense of superiority. Apparently none of her contemporaries, certainly not Burke, took deeper or broader views of life than the comely woman who, travelling alone in the Northern Europe of those days on the business of her unworthy and ungrateful husband, thus reflected on the spectacle of German conscripts drilling for war :—

> I viewed with a mixture of pity and horror these beings training to be sold to slaughter or be slaughtered, and fell into an old reflection of mine, that it is the preservation of the species, not of individuals, which appears to be the design of Deity throughout the whole of Nature. Blossoms come forth only to be blighted ; fish lay their spawn where it will be devoured ; and what a large portion of the human race are born merely to be swept prematurely away ! Does not this waste of budding life emphatically assert that it is not men but Man whose preservation is so necessary to the completion of the grand plan of the universe ?

Here we have the basal idea of Darwinism clearly put, half a century before Darwin, by the woman of

"desultory education." Her deism she doubtless owed to her books; for up till twenty-eight she had been an evangelical Christian;[1] but she held her doctrine in her own right, and thought about her world-theory as earnestly as she did about everything else. One or two sentences in her *Rights of Woman* may serve to show how incomparably more intellectual a creed was hers than the orthodoxy around her:—

> The power of generalising ideas, of drawing comprehensive conclusions from individual observations, is the only acquirement for an immortal being that really deserves the name of knowledge. Merely to observe without endeavouring to account for anything may (in a very incomplete manner) serve as the common sense of life; but where is the store laid up that is to clothe the soul when it leaves the body?

Such was the high way of thought of this clear-eyed woman, still so snubbed and patronised by those of her sex who, following complacently in the path she made for them, are conscious only of her inferiority to themselves. Before Browning, she "theised" in Browning's way; but Browning in his brilliant poem on her[2] does not seem to have known much of her mind; and I cannot feel that he had the right thus to pose her as craving in her heart for the love of Fuseli when, as Mr. Kegan Paul has shown,[3] there is no valid evidence that she was enamoured as is alleged

[1] Letters of 1784, 1785, and 1787 in Kegan Paul's *William Godwin, his Friends and Contemporaries*, 1876, i, 171, 174, 184–85, 188. In one of the letters from Norway (vii) she indicates her change of view in two sentences: "On the subject of religion they are likewise becoming tolerant at least, and perhaps have advanced a step further in freethinking. One writer has ventured to deny the divinity of Jesus Christ, and to question the necessity or utility of the Christian system, without being considered universally as a monster, which would have been the case a few years ago."

[2] In *Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in their Day.*

[3] *William Godwin*, i, 206–7.

by the author of the anonymous *Defence*[1] and by Fuseli's biographer, and some evidence to the contrary. There is just a touch of indelicacy in such handling of a woman's memory. It sets forth as a consciously definite passion a mere unproved potentiality of inclination which her later life discards if it does not negate. In biography let guesses rank as guesses, not as revelations.[2] In the way of speculation concerning her capacity, however, one guess may be permitted. It is warrantable to say, I think, that had she survived many years longer, the life of Godwin would have been lived at a worthier level than that to which it ultimately declined. The years of miserable sponging upon Shelley which leave it a pitiable memory would never have been so lived in marriage with Mary Wollstonecraft.

Sometimes, by way of fanciful amendment on a heaven too dull to attract any thinking soul, one idly dreams of a civilised Valhalla, where there might congregate such persons of past time as seem worth resurrecting. It should, of course, have "many mansions"; and one of them, let us say, might be a place of resort for those remembered men and women whose heads and hearts were alike exceptionally good. I shall not seek to draw up the free list, lest I

[1] *A Defence of the Character and Conduct of the late Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin*, 1803, pp. 58–60.

[2] Another gratuitous guess is the remark of Professor Morley to the effect that, were it not for her "womanly feeling, in itself to be respected," about employing a woman rather than a man when she was in childbed, she would have survived with her child. Professor Morley has not paid proper attention to Mr. Kegan Paul's narrative. Not only was a doctor called in by the midwife as soon as the bad symptoms appeared, but he believed himself to have put everything right; and a second doctor, equally satisfied, spoke of the case as one which showed how well a trained midwife could manage. Mary Wollstonecraft died in childbed under the care of two doctors. It was the imperfect science of their day that was at fault, not the sex of her first attendant.

be accused either of laxity or of fanaticism; stipulating only that the respectable Hannah More should be provided for elsewhere, and that Mary Wollstonecraft should have the warmest of welcomes. In that tranquil Paradise, of course, there should be no falling in love: that would make trouble. But when she should chance to appear in any vista, fitly moving among trees or columns, with light step and flowing robe, the man who did not look her way with friendly eyes would thereby approve himself—well, better fitted for the grounds graced by Hannah More. And if the fair philosopher chanced to let fall her glove, and a man by way of tribute picked it up for her, perchance, being in Paradise, she could receive the homage without the warmth of indignation she once bestowed upon such actions on earth.

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